NOV 11 1929

ALL-STORY

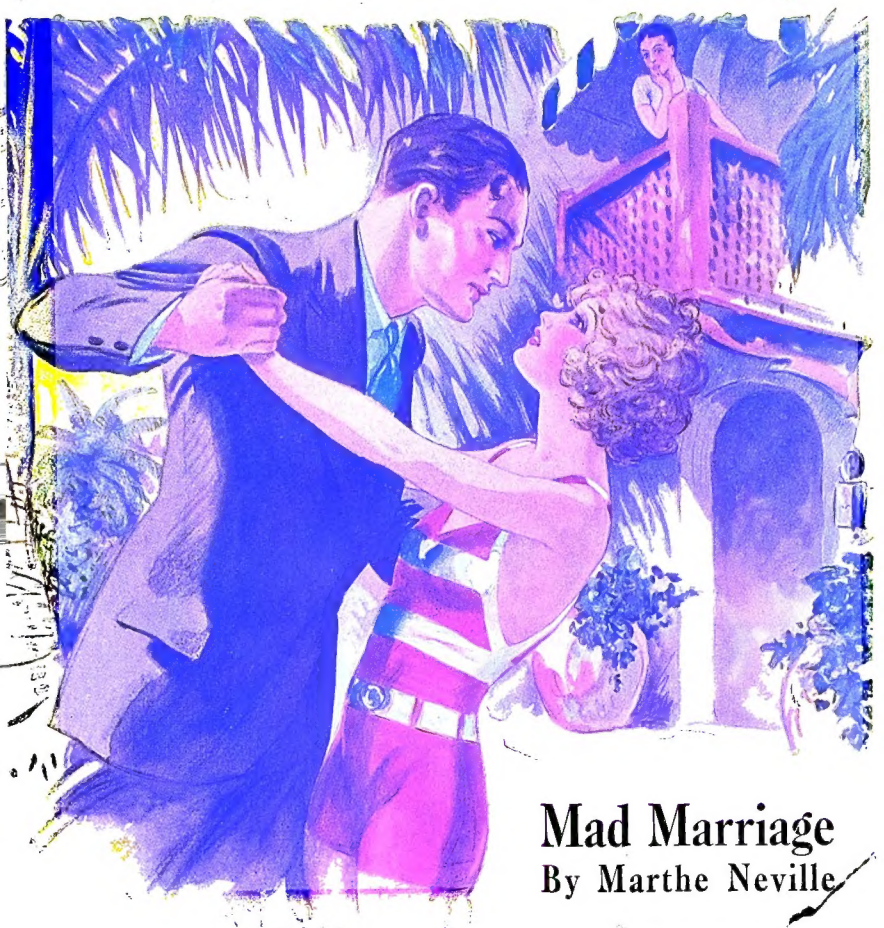
Combined with MUNSEY

NOV. 6

Love Stories of the American Girl

20¢ Canada 25¢

On Sale Every Other Wednesday



Mad Marriage

By Marthe Neville

Google

JEAN - WHOLESOME - GRIPPI

BRAND NEW

GENUINE *Model 3* CORONA

LOWEST PRICE
EASIEST TERMS
EVER OFFERED

$2.00 DOWN

HERE'S your chance to own that *brand new* Genuine Model 3 Corona you've wanted—on the easiest terms ever offered—at LOWEST PRICE ever offered. Complete in every detail; back spacer, etc., *Manufacturer's Guarantee.* Recognized the world over as the finest, strongest, sturdiest portable built.

Yours for 10 DAYS FREE

Send No Money

Leatheroid carrying case, oiler, instructions free on this offer. Send no money—just the coupon. Without delay or red tape we will send you the Corona. Try it 10 days. If you decide to keep it, send us only $2—then $3 a month until our special price of $39.90 is paid. Now is the time to buy. Special Xmas Package if you act now!

Only a limited number of these splendid machines available. To get one, you must act now! Experience the joy this personal writing portable typewriter can give you! Use it ten days free! See how easy it is to run and the splendidly typed letters it turns out. Ideal for the office desk, home, traveling. Small, compact, light, convenient. Don't send out letters, manuscripts, reports, bills in poor handwriting when you can have this Corona at such a low price on such easy terms. Remember, these are *brand new* machines right out of the Corona factory.

Save Money *Use this Coupon*

Smith Typewriter Sales Corp., (Corona Division) 469 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill. Dept. B-31

Ship me the Corona, F. O. B. Chicago. On arrival I will deposit $2 with express agent. If I keep the machine, I'll send you $3 a month until the $37.90 balance of $39.90 price is paid; the title to remain with you until then. I am to have 10 days to try the typewriter. If I decide not to keep it, I will repack and return to express agent, who will return my $2. You are to give your standard guarantee.

Name _____

Address _____

Employed by _____

ALL-STORY

Combined with MUNSEY

Volume 1—No. 4 *Love Stories of the American Girl* November 16, 1929

Novelette and Short Stories:

First Love — Hagar Wilde — 510
Life's sweetest experience is seldom without its sorrow

Crisis — Mary Strother Chambers — 533
Could they have done otherwise?

Winter in Her Heart — Ethel LeCompte — 549
Even at twenty below it's spring—until love betrays

Moon of Araby — C. S. Montanye — 562
Romance in the strange, far desert places

Happiness Junction — Izola Forrester — 577
Trains that passed in the night brought two hearts together

A Line for Lucine — Carol Bird — 594
A gypsy's warning proves a touchstone for happiness

Serials:

Mad Marriage—Part I — Marthe Neville — 482
One moment's folly alters the course of four lives

Wooing Wings—Part III — Clelia S. Mount — 604
Wings of dread become wings of warning

Also—

Handwriting and Happiness — John Fraser — 618
Let graphology guide you

Heart-to-Heart — Agnes Merion Morton — 625
Love troubles solved.

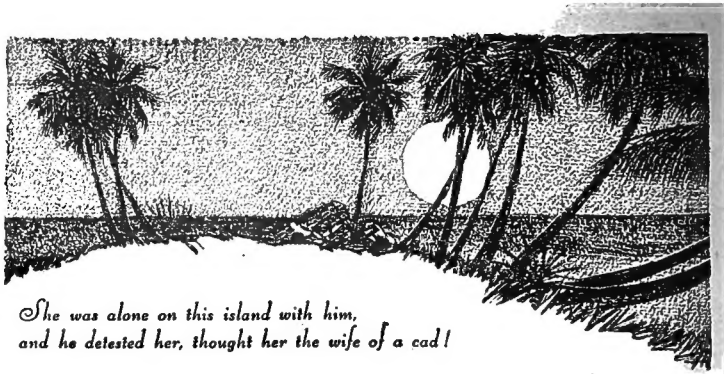
Choosing a Career — Elizabeth Wright — 635
The best profession for you.

In Confidence — Dorothea Dale — 638
Social first aid.

The next issue of ALL-STORY on the stands November 27th

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 Broadway, New York, and
LONDON: HACHETTE & CIE., 16-17 King William Street, Charing Cross, W. C. 2
PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE., 111 Rue Réaumur
WILLIAM T. DEWART, President and Treasurer
C. T. DIXON, Vice President
PUBLISHED EVERY OTHER WEDNESDAY AND COPYRIGHT, 1929, BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY
Single copies, 20 cents. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; $7.00 to Canada and Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered
Entered as second-class matter November 18, 1896, at the post-office at New York, under the act of March 3, 1879.

The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission
TITLE REGISTERED IN U. S. PATENT OFFICE
COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



She was alone on this island with him, and he detested her, thought her the wife of a cad!

Mad Marriage

But two hours wedded Sybil knew her act for a moment's madness that must alter the course of four lives. And then another love came to her!

By Marthe Neville

CHAPTER I

LIKE a silver ribbon the long stretch of road glistened in the moonlight. On either side clumps of palmettos and traveler palms threw grotesque shadows. Here and there the headlights of the car picked out flaming spots of crimson—hibiscus, poincianas, bougainvillea offshoots of some rambling estate.

The breeze, salt tanged and spicy with floral odors whipped loose strands of Sybil's hair about her cheeks.

The girl shivered with the inward chill that in the last half hour had made her strangely silent and not a little fearful.

In the pallid moonlight the chiseled features of her companion were plainly discernible. His profile, with its cameo regularity of brow, chin and nose, was turned toward her. His lips, set rigidly as he bent over the wheel, had lost the twist of whimsical humor that had first attracted her—whimsical in spite of recent illness. And she felt, rather than saw, the scowl that drew his straight brows together over limpid grayish-blue eyes.

The wild exaltation that had plunged her headlong into matrimony gave way to depression.

An hour before she had been swept off her feet by the glamour of romance

and a new and hitherto undreamed-of emotion—the contact of his warm, pulsing fingers, the sheer joy of looking at his six feet of athletic slenderness and handsome face.

His sudden impetuous wooing had thrilled her to a response that, had she analyzed it, might have been found to be infatuation rather than love. There had been no time for self-questioning in that submission to an overpowering mood.

Now at the midnight hour the little stab of fear pricked at her new bubble of happiness. If she doubted her own love for him, was he also doubtful? Beauty—and Sybil knew she possessed beauty—had attracted other men. After all, he could have been fascinated, then regretful of his mad step.

As if in answer to her unvoiced question, he lifted a hand from the wheel and clasped one of hers.

"Cold, beautiful?" he asked tenderly.

"No, but I'll be glad when we get there."

"So shall I."

HE drew her closer to him, until her head with its satin black hair rested against the rough tweed of his coat. Then he bent his own head, shimmering gold in the moonlight, and pressed a cheek against hers.

"I wonder what Louise will say," she ventured. "You sent the telegram?"

"Yes."

Did she imagine it, or was there a slight tensing of his muscles?

"You told her we were married?"

"No. I said 'Sybil and I motoring rest of way. Arrive about one.'"

"Then she doesn't *know?*"

"Didn't you want to surprise her?"

"Yes—but—" Sybil raised her head and adjusted her hat. "But a telegram would have been surprise

enough. She'll probably think us crazy."

He laughed. "All lovers are more or less crazy to other people. After all, sweet, what do we care what Louise or any one says or thinks? I found you, I loved you, I seized you, and the rest of the world be hanged!"

The ardor in his voice, its musical husky timbre, made her tingle with the ecstatic quiver that had gripped her before.

"You aren't sorry I said 'Yes'?" she asked tremulously.

"You hadn't a chance to say no! From the moment I got a good look at you on the train, my dearest, your fate was sealed. You were mine, sweetheart, just as I was yours. I didn't need a year or a month or a week to know it. One minute I was fancy free, the next—I belonged to you. Glad you said yes! Precious, if I'd had to commit murder, I was determined to marry you before we hit Miami."

He crushed his mouth against hers, holding her in a viselike embrace until, with a little gasp of consternation, she struggled out of his arms.

"Be careful," she half sobbed, "or we'll reach Miami in pieces!"

SUDDENLY the low-hanging moon dipped behind a billow of fleecy clouds. Momentarily the foliage and the young couple were blotted out with the velvety darkness. Only the sheen of the white coral road, yellow in the gleam of headlights, was visible.

Sybil sank back in the depths of leather cushions and clasped her hands tightly in her lap. She tried to relax, but found it impossible. Her heart was pounding against the soft folds of her lemon-colored blouse.

Mingled with the anticipation of sweeter hours to come, engendered by the close proximity of the boy beside her, was the acute little stab of fear that all his protestations could not allay.

Why hadn't he worded his message to Louise Bannister as she had requested? When he left her at the parsonage back in Jason to go in search of a machine, he had promised to let her friend know of their marriage.

Had their wedding taken place under different circumstances, it would not have troubled her at all, but there was so much to explain.

Louise was a lovely girl, understanding and loyal, but Sybil was certain Louise would never have done anything so wildly thrilling as to marry a man on twenty-four hours' acquaintance. Especially a man of whom she knew nothing except that he possessed mutual friends, was headed for the same destination, and was distractingly handsome and magnetic.

But then Sybil herself had never thought she would do such a thing until she saw Ted Sherry and felt his fascination.

"You know," she said, breaking the silence, "I'm sure Louise will feel a little hurt because we didn't wait to be married in Miami: we could have done so, so easily, you know."

"I might have lost you," he answered cryptically. "Rod Bannister is a good-looking codger with a hundred dollars to my one. Once he laid eyes on you he'd have wanted you. Then where would I have stood?"

"Rod has known me since I was a baby," she answered, laughing, "and he's certainly shown no indication of ever wanting me."

"How long since he saw you?"

"Over five years. Louise has visited me or I her every year since we quit

school together, but Rod has never been at home when I was there, and he's never seen fit to hunt me up in New York."

"There you are! He doesn't know you've developed into a beauty. Ten chances to one, five years ago you were a sweet little bread-and-butter miss he wouldn't have looked at the second time, while Rod—"

"Rod was all legs and arms and bones," she retorted. "I was no prize beauty, but if he's grown handsome or at all attractive, a miracle has taken place. I always hated him."

"Go on hating him, darling," Ted chuckled. "It's balm to my jealous soul, for Rod Bannister is about the most popular man on the Florida East coast."

"HOW long have you known the Bannisters?" Sybil inquired.

"I only met Louise last winter in Havana, but Rod and I have been friends off and on for three years."

"Is he so very rich? Louise never speaks of money. She's tactful, and never mentions the fact that I work for a living."

"Well," Ted lighted a cigarette before he replied, "old man Bannister left them both a quarter of a million. Rod was shrewd and got into the land boom. He's probably doubled the amount ten times over."

"Goodness!" Sybil ejaculated. "I never dreamed he was a millionaire. That would account for his popularity."

"You see why I wasn't willing to take chances," her new husband bantered.

"Nonsense. I'd never marry a man for his money. You ought to know that."

Now and then through the fronds of palm trees they could see the sheen of distant water. Lights twinkling at intervals informed them they were nearing the end of their journey.

A thick silence dropped between them, a silence broken only by the croak of a frog, the shrill call of a whippoorwill, and the barking of a dog.

The breeze was blowing stronger, carrying with it a damp chill that made Sybil huddle closer to the rough tweed of Ted's coat. "Until death do you part." She was his until death! This man—a stranger until a few hours ago—was now a husband to cherish *all of her life!*

Suddenly he stilled the engine and swept her into his arms.

"I love you, precious, I love you; but you've never once said that you loved me."

"I—I don't know," she stammered. "I can't say until I'm certain."

"But you do, I know you do. And you'll always love me, no matter what happens. You're my wife, and I worship you. And you'll love me, love me as I love you."

The pressure of his lips, moist and hot, bruised her mouth and set little tingles of answering flame coursing through her body.

She relaxed with a sigh of happiness. Yes, she loved him. She must love him, or his touch could not leave her so limp and quivering.

She must love him, or she could not have given herself so unquestioningly. Only love could account for the mad marriage in Jason. Only love could have drawn her to him like a bit of steel to a magnet.

"Say it, sweet," he whispered; "say you love me, before we join the others."

"I love you." She choked, her inky hair lost in the bend of his arm.

CHAPTER II

THERE was small indication of the gayety of the fashionable winter resort as the car swung into the business section of the city. Shops, banks, tourist offices and restaurants were closed. Under a lamp-post Ted noticed a policeman lazily swinging his club and inquired the way to Breckenridge Boulevard. A wide, paved thoroughfare with palm trees on either side. Stucco and stone houses half covered with rambling bougainvillea. Gardens riotous with tropical blooms, velvet-smooth lawns with hedges of clipped croton bushes, and deep-shadowed verandas. Brightly lighted windows. Bursts of laughter, and soft melody. Parked cars—speeding cars.

Ted drove slowly, looking from one side to the other. Sybil saw that he was scowling again.

"You've been here before?" she queried.

"Yes. I think I know the house when I see it."

"No one seems to be in bed," she commented as they passed groups lounging on doorsteps and machines filled with revelers.

"One A.M. is noontime in Miami," he answered. "Here we are."

A house larger than any she had seen since entering the city reared its pink marble structure on the left. Through the trees she caught a glimpse of vine-trailed pillars, a fountain sporting nymphs, and a wide driveway.

Ted turned the machine and swung into the gardens under a stone archway. The heavy, sweet odor of star jasmine and magnolia was overpowering as they drove silently some fifty yards.

At their approach a group of young people on the screened-in porch sprang to their feet.

Ted called, "Halloa!" and the door was flung open.

A man, lithe and slim as an Indian, his muscular bronzed body rippling under the exposing silk of a bathing suit, darted down to meet them.

"Ted, old scout!" he called.

A girl, also in bathing togs, her flame-colored hair hanging in a red gold fleece about her shoulders, followed him. The others, a boy and girl also in bathing togs, stood on the veranda.

"Louise!"

"Sybil!"

Handclasps, kisses, laughter.

"Didn't know you two knew each other!"

"Didn't until day before yesterday."

With easy grace Rod Bannister lifted Sybil's bag from the back of the rented machine and tossed it to a colored man who, in some manner, had emerged from the shadows of the garden. He flung Ted's heavier Gladstone after it; then, linking his arm through that of his friend, pushed him up the stone stairs.

LOUISE and Sybil lingered for a moment in the driveway.

"Glory, how glad I am you could make it," the older girl exclaimed, hugging Sybil. "Was it hard to get away? Did Harding object to your taking your vacation at this time?"

"No. You see he'd promised me a month in May. When I told him I had an invitation to go on a yachting party in February he suggested I accept

He's awfully nice, Louise, really. I'll hate to leave his employ."

"No reason why you should," the other returned, "unless we're gone so long he fires you. Think of it, honey, the Caribbean, and all those quaint little islands. I wouldn't want you to miss it if I had to pay your salary for a year myself."

"Something. I certainly shouldn't permit," Sybil protested, laughing. "You're wonderful to want me as it is, without adding more favors."

"Why shouldn't I want you? I've always been fonder of you than any girl I ever knew."

What would Louise say when she learned of the marriage? What reason could Sybil give for not having waited just a few hours to let her dearest friend witness the ceremony? Louise would be hurt, unquestionably.

Had Ted told Rod of the marriage yet, or was he feeling as tongue-tied and uncomfortable as his bride? Of course, his position was different. He belonged among these people.

Only Louise Bannister's love for her made it possible for her to touch the fringe of a social set that did not know the meaning of labor, of stinting, saving and sacrifice.

She and Louise had attended the same school as children, and loving parents had denied themselves necessities to send Sybil to college. So the early friendship had been kept alive, had grown and blossomed into a beautiful vital thing that Sybil prayed nothing could destroy. Certainly Louise's money nor her own lack of it could never do so.

"What a piece of luck—you and Ted Sherry being on the same train!" babbled the blond girl. "It must have relieved the monotony a lot. Isn't he the handsomest thing?"

Sybil nodded, her heart giving another leap.

"I suppose he told you about his accident. He had an awful spill out of his plane and just escaped death. But he doesn't look any the worse for it. Any one but Ted would have been so battered up he'd have been a horror to look at, instead of a perfect delight."

SYBIL'S eyes followed her gaze. Under a yellow frosted globe on the veranda Ted stood straight, immaculate, and undeniably handsome.

His thick waves of honey-colored hair gleamed like gold. The perfect regularity of his features were more pronounced when contrasted with the rugged irregularity of Rod Bannister's.

Yet Rod had somehow developed from the rangy red-haired boy she remembered into a man nine persons out of ten would have called good-looking. But for his close proximity to Ted, even Sybil—who recalled him with a childish dislike—would have granted that he was attractive. The hair she had disdained as red had darkened, until now it resembled polished mahogany, or deep-dark wine. There were freckles still, but the sun had turned to old ivory his once pale skin and little of them remained.

Rod's eyes had always been nice, she remembered, brown with dancing yellow flecks in them—demons of mischief—and long brown lashes. Yes, he had grown attractive—until one looked at Ted.

Ted—her husband!

"You must meet the others," she heard Louise murmur. "We call them Peter Pan and Wendy, for they're such kids. Married only six months. They're going to be our chaperones. Isn't that

rich? Wendy's seventeen and Peter Pan is twenty-two, but they're perfect dears. They eloped and caused a terrific row in both their families. But Wendy's dad and Peter's mother have bowed to the inevitable, and all's well."

The newlyweds had reached the veranda, and Louise, with a wave of one shapely bare arm introduced them.

"Sybil Copely, Wendy and Peter Pan—in other words, Gwendolyn and Henry Parsons."

Wendy Parsons, a little nut-brown girl in an orange-colored bathing suit, slipped her hand from her young husband's and extended it to Sybil.

"I've heard such a lot about you, Miss Copely," she said in a musical treble as youthful as her little round face, "that I feel I know you. Louise has explained how beautiful and clever you are and what a darling—so I'm going to love you, too."

"Thanks so much," Sybil answered, flushing.

Miss Copely! They didn't know yet that she and Ted were married. She looked across at Ted and their glances met. The expression in his limpid blue eyes was a trifle grave. Breathlessly, she willed him to speak.

"I'm sure," she added aloud, "Louise sees me through rose-colored glasses. I'm not at all clever."

"I don't know about that," Wendy said, her brown head cocked on one side like a preening wren, "but you *are* beautiful."

ROD turned suddenly and stared at her. Sybil felt her cheeks crimson under the steady gaze of his brown eyes.

"By George, Sybil," he laughed, "Wendy's right. Who'd ever dream you'd become a raving beauty! Louise has a picture of you on her dresser that informed me you weren't all angles, but you'd be a knock-out in the movies—they'd cast you as an exotic princess; topaz eyes, blue-black hair, ivory skin—"

"Oh, dear!" Sybil clapped her hands over her ears. "If you're going to tease me as you used to, Rod Bannister, I swear I won't spend a night under your roof."

A sharp intake of breath from Ted at her side made her lift her eyes to his face. It was pallid, and the curves of his lips were set in a rigid line. She recalled what he had said of Rod's attractions, and, half angry, half amused, she realized he was jealous.

The appearance of the negro butler with tall green glasses of mint julep saved an awkward situation.

"In lieu of a nightcap, this," Rod said, lifting his glass. "Then you two children"—nodding at Peter and Wendy—"must run home to your beauty sleep. We leave at eight o'clock sharp."

"To-morrow?" gasped Sybil.

"Positively. Betty Lake's at the Royal Palms, Jim Dunston at the Miami, and we're all raring to go. My skipper, old McDuffy, has orders to set sail at eight. If you and Ted had got here earlier we'd all have gone on board to-night."

"Whither to?" Ted asked, lazily stirring his julep.

"Straight for the Caribbean and the West Indies. We'll search for Spanish doubloons and pieces of eight," Rod laughed. "And who knows—we may find the foot of the rainbow!"

"And the pot of gold," giggled Wendy.

"I've already found that." Ted set his glass on the table. Sybil saw his hand tremble. "Pieces of eight and Spanish doubloons would be welcome;

but I've found *my* pot of gold."

Sybil's cheeks burned. Suddenly she knew the *dénouement* was coming; that Ted had chosen this gracile compliment to break the news of their wedding. A little shiver crept over her, half delicious at his subtle flattery, half apprehensive.

She heard Rod answer, "Then you are lucky, old man. Most of us search all our lives and never find it." Heard Louise's little deprecating laugh.

Then she looked at her husband. There was nothing joyous in his expression. The tense, strained look about his mouth, the twitching nostrils, indicated perturbation.

When he extended his hand toward her, she moved against her own volition. He took her fingers and raised them to his lips. His lips were like ice.

"*This* is my pot of gold!" he said.

Something snapped. Sybil saw it was the slender glass stem of the spoon in Louise's glass. She saw Rod Bannister's shoulders straighten in a manner that made the muscles ripple under brown satin skin. Wendy Parsons giggled nervously.

"Sybil—and I—" Ted hesitated, coughed. "Sybil and I were married in Jason before we drove on here."

"Good God!" Rod ejaculated.

"How — how — thrilling!" Louise rose quickly from the willow swinging seat in which she had been reclining. Under the yellow light her heart-shaped face appeared strangely pallid. "And you didn't know each other until you met on the train! Congratulations!"

IF an iceberg had suddenly descended into their midst the air could not have become more frigid. Ted's hand trembled perceptibly.

"I noticed Sybil when she got on the train," he said quickly, huskily. "She hit me straight between the eyes —you know what I mean—got into my blood. I couldn't keep from looking at her. Nothing like it had ever happened to me before—bowled over—gone. My head was splitting—hadn't quite recovered from my accident. And the shock—seeing her, wondering who she was—set me in a fever. She saw I was ill, and like a Good Samaritan came to the rescue with smelling salts and aspirin. That clinched it. When she spoke I knew I loved her. . . ." He choked.

"He was so terribly white—I forgot conventions," Sybil stammered, hoping to aid him, and suffering for his embarrassment.

"And you fell in love at first sight also?" Louise's voice was icy, though she smiled at Sybil.

Sybil bowed her head.

Why were they taking the announcement as though a crime had been committed? The step had been rash, they might live to repent at leisure for their haste, but surely no sin was involved.

Was it because of her position as working girl? Was Louise a snob after all, who resented one of her monied friends marrying outside his set, or did she think Sybil had turned fortune huntress?

"I suppose—I suppose I should have waited—but the urge to own her was so strong—I lost all sense of proportion or discretion or—or—" Ted's clasp tightened. "I can't explain it. I couldn't make you understand. She doesn't understand—yet. It was as if I'd been starving for a week and saw food. I wanted her—I had to have her. Conventions be hanged."

"And honor?" interposed Rod dryly.

"And honor. . . . I asked her to marry me at luncheon. She refused. I begged her at dinner. . . . At breakfast I pleaded. . . . When we reached Jason I *compelled* her to become my wife."

"You didn't *compel* me," Sybil interjected hysterically. "I was quite willing."

"Two brides and grooms!" Louise laughed shrilly. "What a party we'll have! Rod, have Benedict bring us cocktails and let's drink a toast."

"You don't want a cocktail, Lou," her brother answered gravely. "We'll wish them happiness and good night." He put one arm about her shoulders.

"Not yet!"

Louise pushed aside his arm impatiently. Her red brown eyes glittered, and her head with its aureole of flaming curls was thrown back with a defiance quite out of keeping with Rod's remark.

"The night is young," she added. "Only two o'clock! We'll have nothing to do but sleep on the *Diana*—let's make whoopee! To-morrow is another day; we may be here—we may not be!"

Her voice broke on the last word.

Sybil suddenly felt weak, nauseated. Her fingers slipped from Ted's and she dropped into the nearest chair.

"Sybil is tired," Rod said quietly. "She's had enough excitement with her marriage and the long journey. Let your whoopee wait, Louise."

"Yes," said Peter Pan, speaking as if with effort. "I must get my child home. Come on, Wendy, tell them nighty nighty."

Wendy bent swiftly and kissed Sybil's cheek.

"I do hope you'll be happy," she murmured. She looked at Louise, then flung her arms about her. "Lou, darling! See you all in the morning."

Boy and girl trudged off hand in hand down the driveway and disappeared behind the palmettos.

"They live a block away," Rod said inconsequentially. Then: "Shall I have Norton change the rooms, or will you, Louise?"

Louise started as though dragged from a dream. Her voice was lifeless.

"You do it, like a dear," she said.

Rod opened a door and disappeared inside the house.

CHAPTER III

THE silence that fell upon the three was almost unbearable. When Ted stirred up another glass of julep the clatter of his spoon against the glass was like a gun popping.

Sybil's agonized nerves registered the rustle of the palm fronds, the distant swish of the Gulf waters, Louise's slightly quickened breathing.

Louise's remark apropos of nothing was a welcome relief.

"I hope your father is well?" she drawled.

"Oh, yes. Mother is beginning to show her age, but father never seems to grow a day older."

"Give them my love when you write."

Her effort to be commonplace, to bridge over the situation, incomprehensible to Sybil, was so palpable that the latter exclaimed impulsively:

"Louise, what is it? Are you angry because I married Ted?"

"Angry? Of course not! I'm just flabbergasted, that's all. You've always been so—so level-headed, I couldn't conceive of you doing anything like this. Then, I'd hoped you and Rod might hit it off together."

"I wanted to wait until we got

here," Sybil fumbled miserably. "It seemed fairer to you—"

Louise laughed.

"When love is blinding, who can see a sense of fairness? Bless your heart. You know I wish you every happiness."

It didn't ring true. Sybil welcomed Rod's reappearance.

"The maids are all in bed," he announced. "So I put your bag in Sybil's room, Ted. That 'll have to answer for to-night, but I'll see that you get the bridal suite on the *Diana*."

A wave of quick shame enveloped Sybil. She rose unsteadily.

"I'll come later," Ted said quietly.

Rod stood aside for him to precede her into a wide hallway that apparently divided the lower floor in two. There was a winding staircase at the rear. He led the way toward it.

"I'll show you your quarters," he said.

As the screen door closed behind her Sybil heard her husband say in a husky whisper, "For God's sake, Louise, don't blame Sybil. She hasn't the faintest idea what she's done to you."

Sybil looked quickly at the man beside her. If he had heard the remark, the expression on his face gave no indication of it. Uncompromisingly rigid, he mounted the stairs, while the girl, trembling with a new apprehension, followed him.

What had she done to Louise? What did that husky whisper portend? All the exultation, the ecstasy of her romance, vanished and left her feeling lifeless, her heart as heavy as though weighted with lead. An impulse to descend the stairs and demand an explanation of the two on the veranda made her hesitate at the door Rod opened.

"Pleasant dreams," he said, apparently not seeing the hand she half reached out to him. "Breakfast will be at seven to give us an early start. Don't oversleep."

Before she could answer, he turned and moved quickly down the corridor.

SLOWLY, reluctantly, she entered the large chintz-hung room. A night lamp was burning near a canopied bed. Beside the door was an electric button. She pressed it with a feeling that more light would banish the gloom of her spirits.

There was paper upon the walls, pale gray with sprigs of orchid blossoms. The chintz covering the furniture and draping the long French windows followed the same color scheme and design. Small rugs in two tones of gray were scattered upon the polished floor. A vanity dresser, enameled gray, stood between two doors.

Sybil crossed to it and stared listlessly at her reflection. Her small pansy-shaped face was pale and weary-looking. There were violet shadows under her topaz eyes, a droop to her lovely full-lipped mouth.

Her wedding night! Soon the boy on the veranda below would join her, claim her as his legal possession, and she did not *know* him.

Something was terribly wrong. He had changed since their arrival. Rod and Louise had changed—and so had she. Ted had seemed dear and charming in the car. She had been timid, but happy. Fearful in a way, but only fearful as all brides were reputed to be. Now she was terrified.

She crushed back a sob and moved to the open window. It overlooked the balcony just over the veranda where Ted and Louise were still sitting. She could hear the murmur of their voices.

With no intention of eavesdrop-

ping, she stepped outside and, leaning against the balustrade, rested her flushed cheek against a stone pillar.

A word—a phrase, drifted upward. Her name—Rod's—then a sharp cry from Louise: "No! No! You mustn't tell her! You owe that to me, if nothing else!"

Sybil. . . . If she knew we had intended to marry before leaving here, her heart would be broken—"

Marry! Marry whom? Ted and Louise!

A strangled cry escaped her. That was it! Ted was to have married Louise, and he had married *her* instead! That explained everything! The shame of it—the ignominy!

"With your permission I'll tote your wife down stairs!"

Sybil tensed. Unquestionably they were speaking of her. Either she must go inside and close her ears to the revelation she might hear, or confront them and demand an explanation. But her limbs refused to move; she stood as if turned to stone.

The voices grew louder. Ted's, argumentative; Louise's, hysterical.

"Good God! She's sure to find out. Better face the music now—"

"No! I won't have our friendship ruined—and it would be—I know

Blinded by infatuation for a handsome face and a charming manner, she had not paused to analyze character, to find out if there was honor as well as beauty in his magnetism.

And she didn't even know him!

Sick rage at herself, at the man who had tricked her, made everything reel. She clung shuddering to the pillar while she tried to digest what she had learned. Then with an effort she

moved back into the room, through the door, and down the stairs.

LOUISE and Ted were in the hallway as she descended. Her appearance startled them both. Louise hastily brushed a hand over eyes conspicuously red, and tossed back a lock of hair. Ted braced his shoulders.

"I heard you," Sybil said quietly. "Not all, but enough. You and Louise were engaged—and you married *me!*"

Neither answered.

"Am I right? Wasn't that what you were talking about?"

"Yes." Ted's voice was unnatural, harsh. "Yes. We'd been engaged for a year—were going to marry—before we went on the cruise. It was a rotten thing to do to Louise—a rotten deal for you."

"How could you?" Sybil cried. "How could you? Knowing my love for Louise—knowing that I—"

"That's why I did it," he answered brutally. "If I'd told you or waited till we got here, I'd have lost you—and I wanted you."

"I would have released you," Louise said with an effort. "You should have known me well enough for that. But to spring it on me this way—before Rod and Wendy—to trick Sybil in such a way—I can't understand it."

"Neither can I. What had you to gain by winning me this way? Did you think I'd live with you as your wife, after I'd learned the truth? I demand more than looks in a husband." The scorn in Sybil's voice made the boy wince. "I want honor, decency! I married you to-day, but I'll never—*never* be your wife!"

"Sybil!" he cried.

"Never! For fifteen years I've adored Louise more than any one but my mother. For fifteen years she has been fine and understanding and true blue. Because you were a friend of hers I accepted you—certain that no friend of the Bannisters could be anything but a gentleman—and you've made me unfaithful to my friendship for her—made me do her a terrible wrong. Placed us both in this awful position. Live with you—a cad, a scoundrel? I'd rather die first!"

"Sybil, honey, hush!" Louise caught one of her upraised hands. "Don't talk so loud. No one must know about this, no one."

"How can you prevent it? I won't live with him. I don't love him—I *despise* him!"

"Try to see his side of it, honey. I'm trying to, and he's wronged me as much as he has you. He must love you terribly to do this thing to us, and we have to forgive those who love deeply—don't we?"

"Love!" Sybil sneered. "A man who could do what he did, then brazen it out to you and Rod is incapable of love. I'll go home in the morning. I can have this mock marriage annulled."

"YOU'LL do nothing of the kind." Louise grasped her by the shoulders and shook her. "You've got to consider me. This is no time for heroics or hysteria. My face must be saved. It's unfortunate that Wendy and Peter were here, or—but they are such infants they'll swallow any story I tell them. I didn't intend you should know about me. But as you do—here is what is supposed to have happened. Ted and I were engaged—on a prank—nothing serious, you understand. My announcement of the marriage-to-be was only a joke also. You and Ted have known each

other a long time—I knew of your engagement—understand? Ted didn't jilt me. I knew you were going to be married before you left New York—and was awfully happy about it. That's the story. Stick to it, both of you."

"God knows, I'm willing," Ted muttered thickly. "I'm willing to say anything or do anything you want me to."

"I've too many friends here," Louise continued. "I'm not brave enough to endure their pity. You must do this for me, Sybil."

Sybil looked at her, little, fragile, and appealingly courageous, her brown eyes luminous with unshed tears so close to the surface, her face pallid and pitiful.

Why—why had Ted Sherry thrown her aside? There might be women more beautiful in the strict sense of the word, but surely none lovelier, none with more sweetness of character, generosity, and unselfishness.

Even now, outraged, bitterly wounded, she showed no rancor, only begged for a chance to save her pride and self-esteem.

"You know I'll do all I can, Louise," Sybil said, choking with pity, "except go on as his wife."

"You're hurt now," the other smiled wanly, "but that will wear off. After we are at sea a few days—"

"Sea?" Sybil interrupted. "Oh, I can't go on the cruise now."

"You must. You *must*. Nothing can be changed. There's Betty Lake and the others to think of—and Rod—Rod mustn't know I'm really hurt, or that you dream I'd ever—ever been engaged to Ted."

"If I were your brother," Sybil said through set teeth, "I'd kill him."

"Sybil, for God's sake, don't rub it in," the boy groaned. "Can't you see I'm as unhappy over it as you two? I haven't an excuse to offer except that I went off my head about you. I knew you'd throw me over as soon as you saw Louise—and I couldn't lose you. Won't you give me a chance—let me show you I'm not quite a cur, Sybil?"

"You chose the surest way in the world to lose me," she answered. "I wasn't certain I loved you; now I *know* I never did, and I'll always despise you."

She saw his head with its thick waves of honey-colored hair droop lower, heard his choked sob, then she put one arm about Louise.

"Let me sleep with you to-night," she whispered. "I can't bear to be alone."

CHAPTER IV

SYBIL lay motionless in the darkness. She had heard the clock strike three, the half hour—four. Heard Ted's steps as he mounted the stairway; heard him knock softly on the door of what was to have been their bridal chamber, and whisper her name, then slowly dismount the stairs.

Where was he now? Pacing in the garden or asleep in a hammock on the veranda?

What did it matter? He was nothing to her—nothing but an unpleasant episode that had rippled the smooth sea of her life. But for Louise, she could push him out of her thoughts and forget him.

What madness had seized her to make her believe she could find happiness with him; that physical attraction and fascination were enough for a lasting marriage?

She deserved to suffer for leaping so blindly into the most serious relation of life. Rod Bannister's little finger

was worth more than Ted Sherry's body. Rod Bannister was a *man,* but she had married a cad!

Her hand clasping Louise's under the thin coverlet moved restlessly. Was Louise asleep? There had been no sound nor movement from the girl beside her since they had extinguished the light. If her pillow was wet with tears she was trying to hide it.

Brave, loyal Louise.

Slowly a pallid light stole across the sky, merging into a rosy glow. The twitter of birds filled the air. Sounds of activity from below drifted upward. Louise stirred. Her blue eyes met Sybil's golden ones.

"Did you sleep?" she asked.

"No."

"Neither did I. I thought you were sleeping, so I kept quiet. It's been a long night for such a short one," she added paradoxically.

"Yes. Tell me—Louise—" Sybil raised herself on one elbow. "If I have the marriage annulled quietly—will you—marry Ted?"

"No. That's over forever."

"But you still love him?"

"Yes." A spasm of pain contracted her forehead. "It takes a little while for love to die, I suppose, but I'd never marry him—even if he wanted me, which he doesn't now."

"If only he had not seen me! He must have loved you once."

"Perhaps. I don't know. Maybe he was just infatuated—as you were. Infatuation doesn't last—but love does."

"Oh, Louise, I'm so sorry, so sorry."

"Don't, don't, please. I'll live through it. I'm not the first girl who has been jilted. He meant a lot to me, but probably I idealized him—and the Ted Sherry I loved never existed. It's obvious he wasn't intended for me."

"What a mess my coming has made of everything," Sybil wailed suddenly. "All your kindness repaid like this, and I haven't even the excuse of real love."

"Don't blame yourself, honey. That little imp, Cupid, has played many strange pranks. Heigho—six o'clock. Rod will be calling us if we don't dress in a jiffy. Cruises are gorgeous things, but I loathe early hours."

She sprang out of bed, a slender, boyish figure in coral-colored pyjamas.

"You know, Sybil," she continued, so lightly that the other stared at her in amazement, "I told you not to bring many clothes along. Well, I had Madame Denise outfit you the same as she did me. Open that steamer trunk by the window and see your yachting togs."

"Oh, Lou!" Sybil did not move.

Louise lifted the trunk lid and held up a canary silk sweater with a heavy corded silk skirt to match.

"Your color. I gave her the scheme throughout. All shades of yellow, from lemon to taupe. We're the same height and build, so they should fit. Sweet, aren't they?"

Sybil sank back on the bed, and, digging her head in the pillow, burst into tears.

"Don't!" Louise rasped sharply. "You've got to help me. If I gave way I'd scream. Come on. Your eyes will be red, and your nose swollen. You've got to look happy. You're a *bride,* not a *widow.* Snap out of it. Look at this evening dress, beige lace, and adorable."

COFFEE was served in the breakfast room.

Rod was seated by the coffee urn with a grapefruit before him when the two girls entered. An inquiring ex-

pression flashed in his dark eyes when he saw them arm in arm but he merely rose and murmured, "Good morning."

"Gorgeous day," Louise commended, dropping into a chair beside him. "All looks propitious. What are you having for breakfast?"

"Waffles." He turned to Sybil. "Where's Ted? I warned him we'd breakfast early."

Sybil's cheeks flamed.

Louise answered for her. "He's up. I think he's outside inspecting the pigeons."

Sybil was conscious of Rod's eyes studying her face. To cover her confusion, she lifted her napkin and half spread it across her lap. How courageously Louise was hiding her hurt from her brother, chattering as though nothing had destroyed her love and faith in men!

But Sybil intuitively realized Rod was not deceived, that inwardly he smoldered with resentment and fury against the man who had shamed his sister and betrayed his friendship. Rod Bannister, if she judged him correctly, placed honor above all possessions, and a man without it stood small chance of regaining his favor.

How did she stand in his eyes—as a poor dupe, an adventuress; or as untrustworthy as the man she had married? She wanted his respect. It would be something to cherish—of more value infinitely than the love of lesser men.

How alike were he and Louise, though the girl was fairer, almost fragile, and everything about him denoted strength. The generous curves of his mouth, the breadth of brow, the uncompromising chin, dark eyes, set far apart and slightly oblique. Tender understanding eyes, yet ardent and capable of blazing with anger. Rod could be an implacable enemy as well as a devoted friend.

Almost she pitied the boy who came timidly into the room, and with a brief "Good morning" took his place at the table.

Sybil had been taught the good form of reserve and control of emotions by her mother, a sweet little English woman of good but impoverished family, but now during the intimate meal she first realized its value.

Nothing in the attitude of either Ted or Louise Bannister indicated the feeling they must bear toward their guests. Rod commented lazily about the weather, went into details about his yacht, the *Diana*, and insisted Ted eat heartily to stave off seasickness.

In the midst of the meal Benedict, the colored butler, announced Captain McDuffy. A moment later a weather-beaten, bronzed giant, possibly fifty years of age, came into the room. Then Rod, with the admonition that they hurry, strolled away with him.

"Do you suppose Benedict can arrange about shipping that car back to Jason?" Ted inquired. "I rented it at a punk garage."

"Surely; I'll speak to him." Louise rose quickly and, to Sybil's dismay, left her alone with Ted.

"DON'T go," Ted said sharply, as Sybil started to follow. "I don't care anything about the darned car. I left enough deposit at the garage to cover its cost,—but I wanted to talk to you alone."

"I've nothing to say to you," she announced coldly. "I said all I had to say last night."

"But you didn't. You couldn't mean what you said then. I know you were angry. You had a right to be. But we can't go on like this. You're my wife.

We're married. Whatever you feel about Louise, you and I belong to each other."

"I don't think so."

"Good Lord, Sybil, try to realize why I did it. Don't you know the old saying, 'All's fair in love and war'? I treated Louise shamefully. I admit it. I'm sick about it. But I haven't wronged you."

"No?"

"I married you—a penniless nobody—in preference to a girl with half a million. I took a chance of losing all my worthwhile friends. Doesn't that prove I love you?"

He tried to take her hand, but she drew away from him.

"It only proves that all love is not valuable. Your kind is an insult."

"Sybil!"

"It is! You placed me on the same dishonest footing as yourself. A month—a week ago, you loved Louise. You wanted to marry her. To-day you want me. To-morrow there will be somebody else."

"Is that what you're afraid of?" he cried, his face lighting. "If it is, I swear I'll—"

"No! No!" she interrupted. "It's more than you'll ever understand. And I care nothing for you. Nothing at all. I will never love you."

"Perhaps you've discovered Rod Bannister is a better catch," he sneered, the blood darkening his face.

Her cool eyes, amber in the sunlight, chilled him.

"I'm not surprised you said that. It's quite in keeping with what you have done. But if you were half the man Rod Bannister is I would not be as miserable as I am right now."

She gave him no opportunity to reply. Wendy's voice on the veranda informed her the little bride and her young groom had arrived. She went outside to join them.

CHAPTER V

LONG and graceful as a swan, the *Diana*, immaculate craft of polished copper, shining mahogany and clean white paint, lay moored in the turquoise waters of the bay.

At promptly fifteen minutes to eight a car, driven by a negro chauffeur, disgorged three young couples, with several bags and two steamer trunks, at the docks. Wendy and Peter Pan, Louise and Rod Bannister, and Sybil and Ted.

On the pier, shading his eyes from the bright sun, stood a dapper, rather corpulent young man in flannels whom Rod hailed as Jimmy, and introduced to the others as Jim Stannart.

"Seen Betty?" he inquired.

"Betty?" Jim's eyebrows raised a trifle. "Betty who?"

"You know, Betty Lake!" Louise said impatiently. "Oh, dear, I hope she isn't late."

As the words escaped her a taxi drew near and a tall girl, in white from head to foot, jumped out. She dragged her tam off short brown locks, and with a "Here I am, right on the dot," ran toward them.

Constrained, terribly conscious of her position, Sybil followed the others on board the yacht. She wondered at Ted's lazy nonchalance. He had never met Betty Lake before, but already he was chattering with her in a care-free deferential manner that indicated the ripening of friendship.

Louise, busy as hostess, left the others to their own resources and, followed by the steward, a trim youth in a white uniform, saw to the arrangement of cabins.

Sybil found a deck chair, willow with orchid chintz cushions, and, dropping into it, sat with hands gripped tightly in her lap.

She was wearing Louise's gift, the orange sweater and corded silk skirt. Though her face was a trifle pale, she had never been more beautiful in all her twenty years.

Rod Bannister, in passing, smiled at her from sheer appreciation of that beauty. Sybil's heart leaped. The smile raised her depressed spirits considerably.

Maybe he did not altogether despise her. If he thought she had not known of that engagement between Ted and Louise he could not hold malice against her for long. At most he would consider her a deluded little fool, and time and propinquity would give her the opportunity to show him she was not.

What wonders five years had accomplished in him! The humor which had made him a teasing, annoying boy had ripened into something mellow and worthwhile. The twinkle in his eyes was no longer malicious.

Lazily she watched the gulls circling about the vessel. The shoreline glittering under the golden sun and silhouetted with palms and semitropical foliage, was slowly receding.

Sybil closed her eyes. Too late now. The *Diana* had set sail.

LOUISE touched her shoulder. "Come downstairs," she said. "I want to talk to you a moment."

Sybil followed her through the little smoking room, with its mahogany pool table and miniature bar, into the corridor off of which opened a lounging salon.

The salon was hung with tapestries and cradled a baby grand piano, comfortable chairs, overstuffed divans, and a fireplace.

They descended a winding staircase. Here Louise paused.

"This is Rod's cabin," she said abruptly, indicating an open door. "He is sharing it with Jimmy. Across are Wendy and Peter. Mine is opposite the stateroom Rod has given you and Ted at the end of the hall."

"No!" Sybil choked, white-lipped. "No, Louise, I meant what I said. I'm through with him. Even if the others hear of it, I couldn't—"

"I understand." Louise's fingers cut into the flesh of her arm as though to warn her to caution. "Your trunk has been placed in there, but you can sneak out your clothing and bring it over to my cabin. If you are careful, no one but you, Ted and I will know that you don't occupy that room. You can sleep with me."

"Yes?"

"Leave something in Ted's room—some clothing, toilet articles—so that Simmons, the steward, won't wonder. And *make* Ted see reason. Perhaps later"—again a wistful pathetic smile curved her sweet lips—"perhaps later you will forgive him."

"It isn't a case of forgiveness," Sybil answered. "It's disillusion, and what he has done to you."

"Don't sympathize with me, please. I couldn't stand that. Hurry now. The others are all upstairs. Unpack your things and move them before they come downstairs. I'm afraid of Rod. He's watching me so closely, expecting me to break."

With a little sudden movement she took her hand from Sybil's arm and darted down the corridor into the room on the left.

The door to the bridal suite was open. With a feeling that she was out-

raging proprieties in entering it, Sybil stepped timidly across the threshold. Ted's Gladstone bag presiding by her own on a mahogany bench was like a blow in the face. The twin beds, with sapphire satin coverlets, were another shock.

Trembling as though she were about to commit a crime, she unstrapped the locks of her suitcase and the trunk, and began to unpack. She tossed garments helter-skelter upon the floor, lingerie, gowns, stockings and shoes, with a haste that made fingers all thumbs.

There was a double wardrobe near the door. In it she hung two dresses and a coat, put a pair of her shoes on a shelf, then she placed a comb and brush and a box of powder upon the dressing table.

She smiled wryly as she did this. Louise had so many toilet articles she would not realize Sybil was not fortunate enough to possess more than one set. But never mind. She would borrow from Louise. Become more indebted to one to whom she owed everything, even honor.

WITH flushed cheeks and tumultuously beating heart she caught up several dresses and turned to go into Louise's cabin. The gowns slipped from her arms to the blue carpeted floor. Ted—standing with the door closed behind him, his arms folded—watched her under shadowing eyelids.

"You've changed your mind," he said slowly. "You've decided to play the game fair."

She shook her head, unable to speak. Her eyes filled with tears.

He came toward her, moving with the lithe agility of a panther. She stood rigid, the color draining from her cheeks, until his face, ardent, eager, bent close to hers, until his arms were wrapped about her in a hungry embrace.

"My wife!" he muttered. "My dear little wife!"

Then she cried out, "No! No! You don't understand. I'm going with Louise—Louise! Oh, for God's sake—don't kiss me! I loathe you—I despise you!"

If she had struck him, his face could not have become more convulsed. His arms dropped to his sides. A hard light gleamed in his eyes. He bowed with an ironic smile.

"I understand. Quite. We won't have a scene. Scenes are deuced bad form, as bad form as the poisonous advice Louise has been pouring into your ears."

"Oh!" Sybil sobbed out, for Louise, hearing her cry, had thrown open the door and stepped into the room.

"You called me," the latter stammered. "I didn't mean to intrude."

"Evidently," Ted bowed to them both, "I am the intruder. If you wanted to get even with me, Louise, you've done it. She's through. She hates me. What a fine mess we're in!"

Louise's face, pitifully white under its frame of vivid hair, turned ashen. Her chin quivered as she spoke.

"I'm sorry you said that, Ted. I've been trying to put myself in your place and find a reason sufficient for what you have done. Don't rob me of every illusion. Evidently you have not understood me any better than I have you, if you think me capable of influencing Sybil against you. She is my guest, as such I intend to yield to her wishes."

The boy turned deliberately away. Sybil lifted the garments she had dropped from the floor and started to leave. She saw Louise hesitate. Saw

the tragedy in her dark eyes, and her own filmed with tears.

CHAPTER VI

LUNCHEON was served buffet, in trays on the deck. Silver containers of salads and cold cuts appeared from the pantry, piloted in dignified silence by the immaculate Simmons.

Captain McDuffy and the first mate, a young Norwegian named Karl Brikke, joined them, coloring the conversation with their nautical tales.

Sybil found her interest held by the skipper's narratives. An old salt, he had encircled the globe and experienced many adventures, some of them breath-taking and perilous. Typhoons in the Indian Sea, hurricanes in the Atlantic, and waterspouts in southern waters.

"It was right in the Caribbean I came the nearest to losing my ship," he mused, drawing on a pipe he had gained permission to smoke. "Ten years ago, a little off the coast of Guadeloupe. The closest I ever got to death."

Wendy giggled nervously and nestled closer to Peter Pan.

"We're going into the Caribbean," she said. "Goodness, I hope we don't have a storm."

McDuffy chuckled.

"Not much danger at this time of year. And for seaworthiness I'd stake the *Diana* against many a bigger craft. Shipshape she is and good timber. My *Lilly Lee* was an old girl and no match for the wind and waves."

Some one suggested bridge, whereupon the long afternoon was spent over green baize tables and cards. At best Sybil was an indifferent player. She had had small opportunity to become proficient in the game, and, seated opposite to Ted as her partner, she was too nervous to concentrate.

Betty Lake, with what had seemed to Sybil sardonic humor, had insisted that bride and groom be partners.

"If they can play bridge without squabbling, they'll live happily ever after," she had laughed. "Bridge is a test of love and friendship."

"Shall we test *ours?*" Rod bantered.

Quick-tempered and impetuous, Ted had striven hard to curb his impatience at many of Sybil's false plays, but she realized acutely that he was holding himself in leash, also that inwardly he was fuming over the scene in his cabin.

Despite her constant chatter, Betty Lake was a good player. Her score and Rod's mounted steadily.

With a sinking heart Sybil saw Ted settle at the end of the game. Her offer to pay her share of the debt was indignantly refused, so there was nothing for her to do but determine to play no more.

There was a swimming tank on the yacht, and just before time to dress for dinner all the young people donned bathing suits and plunged in.

Perhaps it was because of her taut nerves, perhaps a lurch of the yacht—Sybil was never quite certain—but in diving she struck her head and was rendered unconscious.

When she revived she was lying on the deck with Rod bathing her temples with eau de cologne, Louise holding one hand, and the others grouped about in helpless dismay.

"What happened?" she stammered.

"You tried to put yourself and me out of commission," Rod answered. He touched his own forehead, where a purple lump had risen. "Were you trying to commit murder or suicide when you banged into me?"

Sybil managed a laugh. She felt sick and dizzy. "Both."

"Are you all right?" Louise asked nervously.

"Yes. Yes, quite."

But she swayed unsteadily when she stood on her feet.

"You can't walk yet," Rod said suddenly. "With your permission, Sherry, I'll tote your wife down the stairs."

Sybil's cheeks flamed as his strong brown arms lifted her bodily. As though her weight were no more than a child's, the man sprinted to the gangway and down the stairs.

Perhaps she fancied it, but for the brief moment her heart was pressed against his, it seemed to her that his pounded faster and that a warm glow emanated from him. Exertion would explain it, and yet—

Louise stayed beside her in the cabin until the sun, a crimson ball in a rose and azure sky, dropped into the sapphire waters. They spoke but little, both tacitly avoiding the topic that was uppermost in their minds.

Louise's face in repose was weary looking, her eyes shadowed and heavy. Her lips smiled often, but the smile never reached the brown eyes. Sybil's heart ached for her. In her pity for Louise she forgot her own position, her own hurt, and the bitterness she felt toward Ted Sherry increased.

On deck, Ted was laughing with Betty Lake, perhaps drinking cocktails, and, for the present at least, untouched by the tragedy he had caused.

JUST before daylight the *Diana* entered the harbor at Havana.

Sybil, restless and only dozing, became fully wakeful when the engine ceased its throbbing. Rising on her elbow, she stared out of the window.

The bay was dotted with lights. Her eyes gradually became accustomed to the darkness. She could see the shore line, with shadowy structures rearing themselves behind a stone rampart and a wide driveway apparently circling the bay.

The cabin was suffocatingly warm. Her nightgown clung to her in damp folds. She decided to dress and go on deck.

Careful not to disturb Louise, who was sleeping soundly, Sybil slid out of bed and, without turning on the light, slipped into her clothing.

Night lights were burning in the corridor, but already a faint glow of dawn had stolen through the open doors.

She stepped outside, and had stood for some little time leaning against the railing, staring at the bleak, sinister Morro Castle and the Cabannas beside it, before she was aware she was not alone upon deck.

A waft of cigarette smoke from the prow made her turn. She saw a tall figure in white flannels sprawled in a chair, and as she looked Rod glanced in her direction.

Her impulse was to go inside without speaking, but he arose and joined her.

"I—I've heard so much of this harbor," she stammered, "I wanted to see it by sunrise."

He nodded, almost curtly. "It's very interesting. I'm fond of Havana—quaint old place, in spite of the tourist and resort invasion. Did you sleep well?"

"Yes." It would not do to let him know that she hadn't.

"It's turned very hot. I wouldn't be surprised if we had a storm before night."

Fearful he might speak of Ted and that her manner disclose too much,

Sybil murmured something about a forgotten handkerchief, and went inside.

Daylight was upon them. Already the sun was a scorching flame. Heat waves obscured her vision from the window. The harbor was ateem with life. The Malecon stretching luxuriously, palm-bordered and frescoed with pink and white and mauve buildings, was dotted with scurrying machines.

Before breakfast was served, the *Diana* lifted anchor and gracefully plowed her way to the pier. Taxis were hailed and the group of pleasure-seekers disembarked for a day in the city.

"No husbands and wives together," Louise cried, with her never-failing tact. "Peter Pan, you and Jimmy must come with Sybil and me. Ted, you and Rod act as escorts for Wendy and Betty. Go where you like, but be on board by six."

DETERMINED to push Ted out of her mind, Sybil managed to enjoy her first visit to the tropical city. And Louise entered into her spirit.

They rambled through narrow streets of shops, passed grilled windows and doorways leading to patios; purchased perfume and gaudy trifles; had luncheon at La Trocha, a quaint old inn on the road to Marnioa Beach.

Tea-ed at the Country Club; visited a sugar plantation, and paused for one race at the Oriental race tracks; watched some peasants dancing *la jota;* witnessed a game of *jai lai.* Then started toward the docks.

There was a stiff breeze blowing, suddenly chilly after the scorching heat of the afternoon. The sun had vanished behind a tumbling mass of purple blue clouds, and Rod's prediction of rain seemed about to be fulfilled.

It came down in torrents just as they reached the *Diana.* The wind tore at the riggings of the little vessel in a fashion that made Sybil look apprehensively at her hostess, and Peter begin to worry about his wife.

Louise smiled. "No need to become anxious. These tropical storms blow over as quickly as they come up, but I do wish Rod and the others would come. They'll be drenched."

Peter Pan paced the deck, his hand thrust in his pockets, his round boyish face puckered into a scowl of worry.

"Gosh, Wendy will be scared pink!" he fumed. "She's terribly afraid of storms. I ought to be with her. It's damned nonsense, Louise, pairing off this way just because we're married."

"Be your age, Peter," Louise bantered. "You're jealous because Wendy's out with a handsomer man. Maybe she's eloped with Rod or Ted!"

But Peter Pan's frown did not disappear until the others, drenched and unhappy, boarded the ship. Rod's face was as dark as the overclouded sky, and he gave curt orders to Captain McDuffy to set sail at once.

Sybil wondered at his attitude until she saw Ted. He had been drinking heavily, and she learned that because of him they had delayed in returning to the yacht.

There was nothing offensive in Ted's manner; he was in a state of jovial well-being that expended itself in bright sallies, much exuberance and affection. But Sybil's heart sank lower.

In his sober senses he could be reasoned with, see the necessity for caution to avoid a scandal, but if he should attempt to exercise his rights as her husband a scene and subsequent *dénouement* could not be avoided.

To her great relief, Betty Lake seemed to be the object of his intentions, and since Betty didn't seem to object to open and ardent, if slightly intoxicated, love-making, danger was postponed.

"He never drank before," Louise whispered. "He isn't the same man. It's just as though a stranger had usurped his body."

Sybil's lips curled. "A coward's way to seek relief. Maybe I've done you a favor, after all."

"No, no, you don't understand! I despise you!"

Even Betty, who was never averse to a flirtation, especially one with a piquant flavor, tried to avoid him. The others, when possible, ignored him.

Sybil knew she was the object of pity among the guests. She would have given a great deal to have declared openly: "I married this man legally, but I am not his wife! I never have been, I never shall be. Don't pity me. He means less than nothing to me."

But if Sybil suffered, Louise suffered more. She found reason for Ted's actions. Loving him, she knew what he endured in loving one who spurned him, and her sympathy overpowered her resentment toward him.

There was another on board who found it hard to simulate gayety, to hide his anger, and that was Rod Bannister. He had felt exceedingly bitter toward Sybil until Louise convinced him the girl did not dream an engagement had existed between his sister and Sherry, then he felt sorry for her. That pity had grown in proportion to the actions of the new husband.

CHAPTER VII

ONLY exquisite breeding prevented an open breach in the next three days; for Ted, as if determined to humiliate further the two girls who had loved him, scarcely drew a sober breath. He became maudlin and as nearly offensive as a person so charming could be.

Not realizing that Sybil's only contact with Ted was at meals and chance encounters on the deck, he visualized her suffering torments below, seeing her love brutally stripped of all illusions and her honeymoon a disaster.

Pitying the bride emphasized her attractiveness. He had been startled when he saw her again for the first time in five years—a girl of jewel-like perfection, magnetic, warm and glowing.

Rod, honorable, loyal, stanch and implacable in his ideas of right and wrong, had unconsciously fallen in love with the girl whom he was certain cherished the man who had jilted his sister!

Even Louise, who was much closer to him than the average sister is to her brother, had no conception of what was going on in his mind.

She attributed his abrupt, almost brusque manner to his dislike for Ted, and feared that Sybil shared that dislike. She was uncertain whether she had freed him from suspicion of her friend.

Without openly doing so, Rod contrived to avoid both Ted and Sybil. Pleasant enough when with them, he was always busy if it looked as though a *tête-à-tête* was imminent.

Since leaving Havana there had been some engine trouble, and his excuses were valid enough. He even thought of turning back to Cuba before going farther south, but Captain McDuffy's assurance there was nothing that the engineer could not remedy had sent them onward.

IT was curious weather for February in southern seas; uncertain, and at times blowy. But when the hurricane struck them no one was prepared for it, not even the skipper.

With a violence that drove all thoughts of personal enmity out of the minds of the travelers, the storm burst upon them, lashing the yacht in its fury, tearing at riggings and bulkhead, sweeping waves broadside and over the deck, and crashing tons of water over masts and lifeboats.

Louise and Sybil, simultaneously aroused from a deep slumber by a terrific clap of thunder, leaped from their beds, only to be thrown across the cabin.

The ship, tossing about on the angry sea with no more resistance than an empty bottle, lurched first to one side, then the other.

"Help me close the window!" Louise shrilled above the howl of the wind. "The rain is blowing in in torrents."

Both girls were bruised and soaking before it was accomplished.

The bed, torn from its metal fasteners, slid across the room. Glasses and toilet bottles crashed to the floor. Chairs and baggage rolled about crazily.

Sybil read fear in Louise's dark eyes.

A sharp knock on the door, and Rod's imperative "Girls!" made the latter struggle toward it and confront her brother.

"Get into your clothes," he said grimly, "and into your life preservers. There may be no danger, but it's just as well to be prepared."

Another crash flung him headlong into the cabin and against Sybil. The impact caused her to lose her footing, and she fell to the floor. He bent quickly and pulled her to her feet, exclaiming, "Are you hurt?"

"No! No!" she half sobbed. "I'm —all right."

For a second his arm lingered about

her slight figure, then he whirled upon Louise.

"Wendy is having hysterics in the salon. See if you can do anything with her, won't you, Lou?"

Louise threw a padded robe about her, caught up her life-belt, and, clinging to the stationary wash-basin, left intact, managed to make an exit.

Rod stepped outside for a moment.

"There is danger, isn't there?" Sybil asked tensely as he reëntered. She was strapping the life preserver over her hastily donned garments.

He looked at her steadily. His face was gray above the rubber coat he wore, and its expression was his answer even before he nodded his head.

Another terrific crash, as though the whole hull of the vessel were splintering, made speech impossible.

He caught her arm and pulled her out of the door as the furniture began to careen again.

Silently, almost carrying her, he dragged her up the stairs and into the salon. Then he left her and went outside to find the first mate.

WENDY, on a sofa, was moaning and wringing her hands with both Louise and Peter Pan trying to calm her. Grim-faced and rather white, Jim Stannart stood braced against a window, staring out, while Betty Lake huddled in a chair, her hands clasped in the lap of a pair of modernistic pyjamas. All wore their life-belts.

"Where is Ted?" Betty said, upon seeing Sybil.

Sybil started.

"I—I thought he was here," she stammered.

Louise turned, then abruptly leaving Wendy, stumbled toward the corridor.

"Rod!" she called. "Rod, find Ted. He's—he's below. Maybe he isn't—awake!"

Sybil glanced at the group in the room, at the ominous life preservers; then she followed Louise.

"Go back," she said quietly. "I'll find Ted."

"Perhaps you'd better."

Through the window Sybil saw Rod outside, clinging to a railing while he tried to speak above the wind and rain to an officer. The waves splashing over his coat made it glisten under the light. His crisp dark hair was blown into a d i s h e v e l e d curly heap. He looked big, masterful and unafraid.

Sybil was not conscious of fear. Something in the storm, the element of danger, set her pulses dancing. Death could come but once, and she had little to live for now. It would be glorious to stand beside Rod Bannister, unafraid, with the wind and rain her opponents.

As she stood there Ted lurched up the steps. Eyes bloodshot, not quite sober, and a bit uncertain what had wakened him, there was little of the charm about him that had fascinated her a few days before.

A keen desire to avoid contact with him, coupled with an urge to face the wind beside the man outside, made her pull open the door and step out upon the deck.

The floor was puddled with water and slippery. She almost lost her balance, and gave a sharp cry.

"Go inside," Rod cried sharply. "For God's sake, what are you doing out here?"

"If there's danger," she answered quietly, "I want to face it. I can't stand being shut up in there, trapped and suffocating."

"I can scarcely keep my own footing," he said gruffly, "without having

you to look after. The deck is no place for a girl now."

She did not answer. The salt tang of the wet air, the wind lashing her clothing about her limbs, the water splashing about her feet, exhilarated her.

There was something marvelous in the terrific battle of the elements, glorious in standing side by side with this man who did not hesitate to command her, who did not know the meaning of terror or defeat.

She forgot her marriage, Ted Sherry, and Louise. With both hands gripping the railing, she stood there swaying with the lurch of the ship.

All the while she stared at the great foam-crested billows that came tumbling toward her, to break in thunderous roars against the vessel.

"For God's sake!" Rod cried again, as another mammoth mound of water crashed over the masts. "Your life isn't worth a penny out here!"

"What about yours?" she retorted stubbornly.

His hand, warm and firm, held her forearm. The pressure tingled like electricity through her veins and flooded her with a sense of well-being.

"This is my ship. I'm responsible for every one on board. I've got to be here."

Before she could answer, the *Diana* dipped as though some giant hand had pushed her forward with intent to turn her upside down. At the same moment a monstrous wave washed over the deck.

Sybil screamed as the great body of water wrapped about her, carried her off her feet, and tossed her into the black angry sea.

The roaring about her, the sudden plunge from deck to sea stunned her. For a moment she was unconscious of what had happened. The life-belt about her waist kept her from sinking, but she was tossed, helpless and battered, as each receding wave carried her farther and farther from the ship.

Rod saw the girl as she was swept overboard. With a smothered exclamation he tore off his rubber coat and leaped after her.

CHAPTER VIII

ALIVE to her danger, Sybil screamed repeatedly. She struggled with all her strength against the waves which immersed her.

The screams led Rod in her direction. She was fainting when he reached her, incapable of more than to clasp his hand and relax in his arms.

A deafening crash of thunder and a vivid streak of lightning illumined the *Diana*, now tossing helpless in the sea of churning foam, as the man and girl hopelessly tried to reach her.

Each wave carried them farther away.

The girl, clinging to him, her body shaken with nervous tremors, made Rod set his teeth, tense his muscles, and strive the harder. His only hope lay in the fact that, if their loss were discovered in time a lifeboat could be lowered and might reach them before they were swept too far.

Strain his eyes in the darkness as he would, he could see nothing save when the lightning flashed. Each time the ship was less distinct.

His heart sank. He held the girl closer. At least in death she would be his. The water was not cold; he was young and virile. The life-belts would save them from drowning—but for how long?

"I can't see the ship," Sybil said, breaking the tense silence. "Are we going the right direction?"

"Yes."

"Do you think they could find us with a boat?"

"I think so—if—"

A numb feeling of lethargy stole over him, the utter futility of trying to combat the sea. If any one had discovered by now that they were missing, a boat would have been lowered. He was certain of that.

McDuffy and Brikke, intent on saving the ship, would have small thoughts of a man overboard when all were supposed to be safely inside the cabin.

Now the *Diana* was no longer visible, even in flashes of lightning. Perhaps she could not weather the gales. That engine trouble—

Rod had no way of gauging the time. It seemed a century since he had plunged into the water. Cramped limbs and sore muscles were no indication of the hour.

He tried to keep up Sybil's spirits, to encourage her by saying that if they were not discovered before daylight, at least with the morning would come rescue.

But when the storm abated, a gray haze banished the inky blackness of night, but no white hull of the vessel appeared on the horizon, no lifeboat. Deception was no longer possible.

"It's my fault!" Sybil wailed, breaking for the first time. "If I'd listened to you this wouldn't have happened. You should have let me die—my death was enough without yours."

"We won't die," Rod answered grimly. "Keep your nerve; we'll be found."

THE gray light vanished with a magical suddenness. A ball of crimson arose out of the water, spreading streaks of flame and orange and gold across an unbelievably blue sky. It streaked with gold a sea as placid and colorful as a polished turquoise, and as bare of life!

"She's gone!" Sybil sobbed. "The *Diana* has gone on without us."

"Or," he answered grimly, "she's sunk. She was listing badly. I knew it, but I didn't want the others to find out."

"And the others have—drowned?"

Oh, no—that would be too terrible! Captain McDuffy would have used the lifeboats. Sybil couldn't believe it.

The man did not answer, and for an hour or more they drifted in silence. His mouth was hard and tense, his eyes black with concentration. Sybil sensed that he was thinking of Louise, wondering more about her fate than his own future.

The sun rose higher. Its rays became more intense. Her head swam. A terrific thirst assailed her, accompanied by a blinding headache. The skin on her face and arms and shoulders felt scorched. She bent and buried her face in the water, only to feel it smart from the salt.

"I'd give a lot for a cup of coffee," she said with a pathetic smile.

"Wouldn't mind one myself, but don't think about it."

"Where do you suppose we are?"

"Hard telling. We were headed for Trinidad, but the storm swept us out of our course, so I'm uncertain now. The heat would indicate we aren't far from the equator."

Her eyes burned now, the lids were parched. She had difficulty in keeping them open. The weight of her skirts, short as they were, were like sacks of lead about her limbs. The water was steadily growing warmer.

Suddenly Rod rasped, "Maybe it's a mirage, but it seems to me I see a yellow streak off there; do I?"

"You mean—land?" she gasped.

"If I see it, it's land."

She jerked her body into activity.

"I think I see it, too. Shall we try to swim?"

They made some progress for the first hour—but by noon Sybil had become unconscious, and Rod plowed on, dragging her with him.

At nightfall he sprawled full length across a barren stretch of sand and collapsed beside her.

CHAPTER IX

SYBIL regained consciousness under the round disk of a silver moon that hung so low it seemed to touch the sea; under a sky of midnight blue dotted with stars that scintillated like diamonds.

For some moments she lay there, wondering where she was and what had happened.

There was a dull throbbing pain in her temples. Her throat felt swollen and dry, her whole body bruised and battered.

The swish of the waves, their roar as they beat against the rocks which jutted out in a jagged formation, brought her suddenly back to reality.

They had been swimming toward land when she f a i n t e d. She had reached it—but where was Rod?

An icy hand clutched at her throat. Had he saved her, and lost his own life?

In that moment, struggling to collect her faculties, every nerve a torturing reminder of what she had endured, the blinding revelation came to her *why* she had feared death so little when he was beside her.

She loved him!

Not with the mad infatuation that had tricked her into marriage with Ted Sherry, not with the response to physical charm; but with a deep, all-absorbing, unquestioning passion.

The irony of the joke which Fate had played upon her made the girl clutch her cold hands and set her teeth. Louise had hoped for an alliance between her and Rod, and she had stolen Louise's lover. The boy she had remembered with dislike had proved the one man in the world to whom she could give herself without reserve.

And he might have cared for her if she had not shut herself out of his life by her one rash act. There had been admiration in his eyes, joy in seeing her again, until he learned of her marriage. Afterward—distaste, mistrust, aversion. Her bravado on the yacht had completed it.

How he must despise her!

But she was thankful that Fate had not added the final ironic touch, and seen fit to send Ted to her rescue instead of the man who had the legal right. Death would have been preferable to that!

She laughed mirthlessly, inaudibly. Death was still near. It might already have claimed Rod. And she was thinking of love. Love—when it would always be denied her.

SHE raised herself on her elbow and looked around her. She was lying on a beach that extended, peninsula-like, into the water. To her right rose craggy jagged rocks. Behind her were dark shadows, a jungle of palm trees, thick clustering roots, and underbrush.

"Rod!" she wailed, her voice freighted with terror. "Rod! Where are you? Rod!"

There was a crackle of twigs behind her. She whirled, suddenly sick with relief, as Rod pushed aside the under-

brush and hurried toward her. He carried a bundle of branches which he flung on the sand.

"You're all right?" he asked.

"Yes. Yes—I was afraid—you—" She became incoherent.

"I went to reconnoiter a bit. As much as I can judge by this light, we're on an island, or at least a peninsula. Luck was with us—inasmuch as it has a beach. I'm going to build a fire. It will help—if they're searching for us."

Weak in the knees, she dropped to the sand again. She watched him in silence while he laboriously rubbed pieces of dried wood together and eventually produced a flame.

"Remembered that from the adventure books I read as a kid," he chuckled. "Now, if we could only find drinking water we'd be comfortable, for there seems to be fruit here."

"Coconuts, anyway," she said, nodding toward the clump of palms.

He left her abruptly. In the moonlight she could see him searching the ground under the trees.

"This will do for the present," he said, returning with two nuts. "In the morning I'll skirmish for more."

He broke open one of the nuts by cracking it over a rock, and gave it to her. She drank eagerly.

The fire crackled and blazed, throwing dancing shadows upon the sand and sea. Hundreds of tiny scurrying crabs emerged from mounds to escape the heat.

"How do you feel now?" he asked, sprawling before the fire. "You've had a narrow escape."

"I'm all right. Tired and worried, of course, but physically all right."

There was so much she wanted to say to him. So much she wanted to ask.

She knew the deep affection that existed between Rod and his sister. If he believed the *Diana* to be lost he was in agony; yet his austere manner made it impossible for her to speak of it.

"Lie down," he said, breaking into her troubled thoughts. "You need sleep. There's no danger from wild animals here, but I'll keep a lookout."

Sybil obeyed him, though she felt squeamish of the sand crabs.

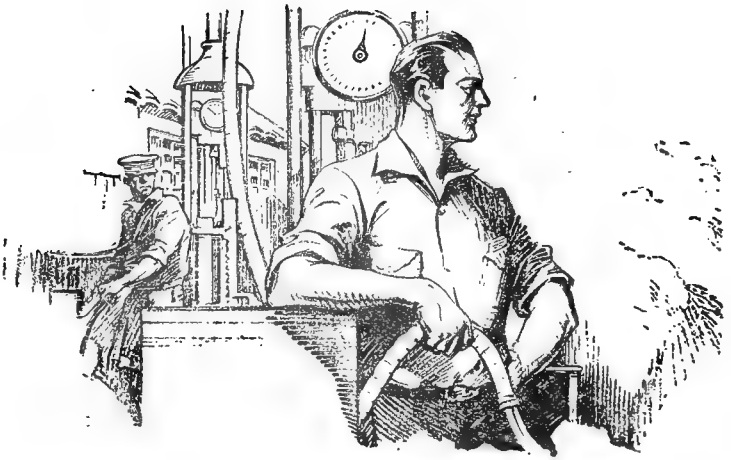
Rod sat hunched forward, arms embracing his knees. Apparently he was oblivious of her presence, but in reality acutely conscious of it. Acutely conscious of their peril and the awkwardness of their situation.

He dared not permit himself to think of the fate of the *Diana*, his sister, and all the others on board.

Morning would inform him whether or not this strip of land was inhabited—or if he and the girl whom he had no right to love were marooned indefinitely upon a barren island.

Sybil slept. Poor child! A bride, and torn away from her groom a week after marriage. A worthless husband, but she undoubtedly loved him.

Rod must never forget that! No matter how long Fate saw fit to keep them here, he must remember she was Ted Sherry's wife.



First Love

When twilight brings a husky sadness that grips your throat; when you buy gallons of gasoline you don't need just to see a pair of eyes; when life is a dream and wraps you about with a golden glamor—you're in love!

By Hagar Wilde

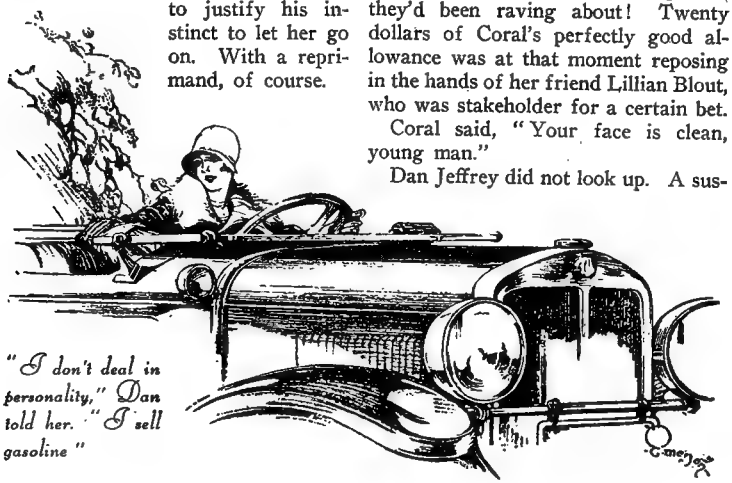
A HIGH-POWERED roadster broke the speed limits of Delton and swooped down the main street. A diminutive figure in a scarlet coat peered over the top of the wheel. She could *just* see over. At the corner of Main and South Streets, she slackened her speed. A motor cycle drew up alongside. Its rider dismounted, brandishing a little black book.

Coral Trent stared at him and smiled placatingly. "Did you want me?" she asked.

He removed his goggles. He hadn't realized that she was as pretty as this. "Well," he said, "you've been doing sixty-five for the past three miles."

Surprisingly enough, she answered, "I know it."

"I'll have to give you a ticket." He wished that she had offered the slightest excuse; he might have been able to justify his instinct to let her go on. With a reprimand, of course.



"I don't deal in personality," Dan told her. "I sell gasoline"

"All right," Coral said. "Write it neatly."

He scribbled her license number on a little slip.

She sat back with a little smile and watched him. He handed it to her, watched her jam it in her purse and drive away.

He shook his head. A pretty kid, all right. That speedster—if he knew anything about speedsters—had cost her father a pretty penny.

On the outskirts of Delton, Coral twisted the wheel and mounted the incline leading to a gasoline station. She sounded her horn.

A young man appeared in the doorway. He was the sort of young man that fills a doorway when he appears in it. His hair was neatly combed, and his face shone with cleanliness.

Coral smiled. "Ten special," she said.

"Yes, miss."

Coral peered around the side of the door. So this was the young man they'd been raving about! Twenty dollars of Coral's perfectly good allowance was at that moment reposing in the hands of her friend Lillian Blout, who was stakeholder for a certain bet.

Coral said, "Your face is clean, young man."

Dan Jeffrey did not look up. A suspicious number of high-powered motors driven by young ladies had appeared in his gas station during the past week. They had all started conversations.

"My face is always clean," he answered.

"This is a very nice station."

"Isn't it?" Dan said.

"Don't you suspect me?" Coral queried. "My gas tank is half full."

"Maybe you're starting on a long trip," Dan said.

"I'm not."

"It's your privilege to buy gasoline at any time you happen to be taken with the whim."

"I know," said Coral, "but if I wanted to stock up on gasoline because I liked the smell, I'd do it in New York, wouldn't I?"

"How do I know?" Dan said.

Coral stepped on the starter viciously. He was all they had said he was. High-hat and snooty. Good-looking and well-built. Unapproachable.

It was the first time Coral Trent had found herself ignored. She didn't like it. She didn't like him because he made her conscious of it. She said over the roar of the motor, "I don't like you."

"I don't deal in personality," Dan said. "I sell gasoline."

She zoomed down the driveway and onto the street. She did not look back. If she had, she would have seen Daniel Jeffrey staring after her. And hers was the first conversational car that he *had* stared after.

SHE stopped at Lillian Blout's on her way home. Lillian was having tea in the living room, and Mildred Fontaine was entertaining every one with an account of Coral's acceptance of the bet.

"You see," Mildred said, "Sally Mott found him. He's excruciatingly good-looking—you know, the football type—with soft brown eyes—"

"What more could you want?" Brander Clifford asked, yawning. "You'll probably find out he's the exiled Duke of Abracadabra."

"Well, he is handsome," Lillian said.

"And snooty," said Coral, entering. "Some tea, Lillian, tea and comfort for little Coral. Bring me blankets. Get a hot water bottle and a footstone. Little Coral's frozen to the bone."

"Wouldn't he talk to you either?" Mildred asked.

"No, darling; not civilly. Collect your twenty. I consider it a pretty rotten break that I had to bet on a dark horse. How could I know he was one of Philadelphia's four hundred?"

"Coral!"

Supplied with sugar and lemon, Coral leaned back and regarded them impishly over the rim of her cup. "Close your mouth, Mildred, dear," she suggested, and went on drinking tea calmly.

"What's he working in a gasoline station for?"

"Maybe he's sick of being a society light," Coral said.

Coral was well-known for her practical jokes. They were never unkind—she never told a direct lie—but some of Coral's silences had led to episodes which furnished amusement in her set for months afterward.

"Coral, how did you find out? Did he tell you?"

"I just looked at him and knew," Coral said.

She put her tea-cup down and brushed the crumbs from her lap. "Now that I've reported," she said, "I'm going home. Thanks for the tea, Lillian. I'll see you at Bobby's party to-night."

"Okay," Lillian returned, "if I can see you through the surrounding crowds of males."

"I'll ride home with you," Brander offered.

SETTLED in her car, Brander looked at her. "Come clean, minx," he said.

"Of course he isn't one of Philadelphia's four hundred," said Coral. "I didn't say he was!"

"I always suspect you when I hear you making indefinite statements. I always know I'm right when I see your eyes twinkle."

"It's going to be rather funny," she said laughing. "I can see the girls

buying gallons and gallons of gasoline. Their houses will be stocked with gasoline."

"What is he like?"

"He's all that they said. In fact, he's a little more. He seems to be perfectly sure of himself and not at all awed by a thirty-five-hundred-dollar speedster."

"Not at all awed by—you, Coral?"

"Still less."

"Strange. I can't imagine a man looking at you without a feeling of awe. It still doesn't seem possible to me that one girl can embody so much that is desirable."

"Excluding the money?" said Coral.

"Excluding everything but the girl herself."

"Nice Brander."

"Nice Brander, who has asked you some sixteen times to become Mrs. Brander Clifford."

"You don't hold it against me, I hope."

"I have a slight feeling of resentment because you've never accepted," he said, "but it would hardly be the thing to resent the fact that I've asked you."

"You know, Brander," Coral slid into the left turn line, "I sometimes wonder what's the matter with me."

"Nothing."

"I know, but why don't I fall in love? Why don't I enjoy things? I'm pretty popular. I know the best men in our set. I've money, looks, a good mind—"

"Coral, I warn you, I'll weep in a moment."

"Tell me, Brander, don't laugh at me. Am I spoiled for the simple things of life? Do you know any way to make me enjoy it?"

"It's a large order, Coral. My advice would be to fall in love—but I'm not going to give it to you, because I know you won't fall in love with me and I don't want you to fall in love with any one else!"

"But I never see a man I think I could love. I have visions of being a lonely old maid, beloved by the neighbors for my willingness to sew their curtains and take care of their children when they want to go out."

The car slid to a stop before a large apartment house, canopied to the street. Brander got out. He reached over and touched her hand.

"'Bye," he said.

"'Bye. Shall I see you at Bobby's?"

"If you don't, my evening's going to be a total loss."

She smiled at him and drew away from the curb. Down Fifth Avenue once more, west on Fifty-Second Street to Park and down Park Avenue to the towering apartment house which boasted, among other prominent names, that of Anthony Trent.

SHE found her father reading the financial sheet. "Hullo, there," she said, kissing the top of his head.

"Hello, Cora. There's a present for you in your room."

"Thanks, Anthony. What is it?"

"It's a green elephant with a pink nose, of course," he said.

"Anthony—I've been taking inventory."

"On what, my angel?"

"On me. I'm all wrong."

"I think you're a shade short of perfection," said Anthony.

"Yes, darling, I know. But look here. I'm eighteen. I'm pretty. You give me a good allowance and shower me with pretties. People like me. People recognize me in the street as Anthony Trent's daughter. I'm proud

of *that* of course—but something's wrong. Something has to be fixed."

"What, for instance?"

"The inside of me," Coral said "It's—it's pretty bad. I can't fall in love, Anthony. Isn't there something wrong about that?"

"It will work out."

"*Will* it?" Coral said. "Haven't I been waiting a whole blessed year for it to work out? Anthony—I'll be *nineteen* in December. Think of it—nineteen and bored. I don't like living. Sometimes I even wish I could stop."

"Living?"

"Yes, dear—if it weren't for you, I wouldn't mind stopping this minute."

"Oh, what a sad state of affairs!" said Anthony. "Go in and get your present, baby; forget your troubles."

"You have a jolly way of dismissing trouble," Coral said, "but it doesn't help any. You have to help me out, Tony."

"I'll send you to Europe."

"I don't want to go to Europe."

"Then I'll send you West. I'll go West with you, in fact."

"I don't want to go West."

"Then go in and get your present."

She grabbed her hat from the lounge and started out. Suddenly she stopped. "Anthony," she said, "I saw a man today who didn't care whether I lived or died."

"Who could that have been?"

"It was a very tall, very clean gasoline man."

"A what?"

"He has a gasoline station," she said. "He wouldn't look at me when I talked to him."

"Tragic," Anthony said. "You'd almost think a gasoline man would look at anybody who talked to him. It's good business."

"Ah," Coral said, "but he didn't care whether it was good business or not. He didn't want to look at me."

"He should be imprisoned."

"Anthony—the thing I'm getting at is that I think he was happy. He looked happy. I was angry because he was happy and I wasn't. That's not nice, is it?"

"No, it isn't. Where was this gasoline man?"

"In Delton. I had a bet on him."

"What sort of bet?"

"Mildred Mott swore that I couldn't go out there and make him talk to me—conversation, that is. You know the sort. I don't mean just answering my questions, but liking me and wondering who I am and what I do for amusement. Personal interest, I mean."

"Well?"

"Well, I lost," Coral said.

"Good," said Anthony. "Maybe now you'll leave gasoline station tenders alone."

"Dear, darling Anthony," said his daughter. "Sometimes I could choke you."

SHE dressed for Bobby's party three hours later. Anthony's present was a new evening bag embroidered in seed pearls. He delighted in giving her beautiful gifts.

She went in before she left and kissed him. She was carrying the new purse.

"Anthony," she said, "sometimes I suspect you of having a mother instinct."

"I've had to have since your mother died," he said. "I couldn't trust you to a nurse, could I?"

"No, darling. Not one nurse in ten would have survived."

"Where are you going?"

"Bobby Elton's. Roof bungalow,

you know. It's nice to be above things once in awhile."

"Will I see you again to-night?"

"Probably not. Bobby's parties last late."

"Good night, then. Be a good girl."

"Yes, darling." She leaned over and kissed him again. "You're a precious," she said, "a real precious."

BOBBY ELTON'S roof bungalow overlooked the busiest section of New York City. Seventeen stories below life went on in miniature. The lights of Broadway flashed white reflections to the sky, and wide searchlights pierced the area above the reflections with an occasional shaft of light that illuminated first a golden turret, next an advertising sign, and an office window farther across. From there the searchlight went on to search out hidden colors in the Hudson and East Rivers.

Coral met Mildred Mott downstairs. They went up together. Bobby, a slight blond boy whose parties were the talk of New York City, had an orchestra there.

He greeted them at the door. "Coral," he said, "there has been an atmosphere of gloom which will now be lifted. Your first, third, fifth and seventh dances are taken. Don't forget." He disappeared with a wave of the hand which indicated that they should leave their wraps in any convenient spot and make the house their own.

In the dressing room Mildred confided, "I can't get that gasoline fellow out of my head. I wonder why he's working in a gasoline station."

"Maybe it's necessary," Coral returned, sticking to the truth.

"I know, but if he has money and wants to amuse himself, he could find so many better ways than—than dishing out gasoline, couldn't he?"

"Maybe he likes to dish out gasoline."

"I'm driving up Westchester way to see Aunt Sally to-morrow," Mildred said, thoughtfully.

Coral grinned. It was common gossip that Mildred loathed her Aunt Sally, because Aunt Sally was always poking her nose in what Mildred considered her private affairs.

Coral went out and closed the door. She stood in the doorway of the living room which had been cleared for dancing, and there was a stampede from the other side of the room—all men. Bobby called over their heads, "Coral's got the first dance with me. Stand aside!"

Everybody was there. Coral knew them all. She danced until ten o'clock. Bobby noticed that she was tired. When they danced together again, he said, "What do you say we cut and get out of here? We could catch the fight at the Garden. The preliminaries will be over and Terrell and Alphonso will be about ready to start."

"You can't leave your party."

"They won't miss me. Tommy will see that they are taken care of." Tommy was his Japanese butler.

She nodded. "How about seats?"

"Gahagan sent me four this morning. Want to take anybody?"

"Bart's interested. We might ask Mildred and Bart along."

"I'll search 'em out. I think they went out on the roof. You get your things."

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN was packed. Bobby had ringside seats. Mildred was a little afraid, but thrilled. Coral was glad to be there because she couldn't think of any place she'd rather have been.

They sat through the fight and the cheers, and Mildred screamed occasionally, but Bart couldn't hear her because he was screaming louder than she was. Coral couldn't understand it; and when Alphonso went down and they held Terrell's hand up, she did not join in the hoarse cries that nearly deafened her from all sides. She just sat there.

Bart was jubilant. Mildred was talking excitedly. She didn't understand it either, but she liked to pretend she did. Coral wanted to go home. They left.

As they struggled through the crowds at the entrance, Mildred grabbed her arm and clenched it, tightly. "Coral," she whispered, "look!"

"Look where?"

"To the left. It's—it's—"

Coral looked to the left.

Five paces from her, with the crowd milling around him, jostling him and poking its elbows in his ribs, stood the gasoline station man. He was dressed in faultless evening clothes, carried a topcoat slung over his arm and a silk hat in the other hand. He was staring straight at her. When their eyes met, he turned swiftly and made his way to the street without a backward look.

Coral's temperature increased a point or two. She stared at the spot he had vacated. What in the world was *he* doing at a spectacle which costs the entire salary of a gasoline mechanic for a week? And in faultless evening clothes?

Mildred said in hushed tones, "Wouldn't you think he'd be afraid some of his friends would see him at that gasoline station?"

"I'm sure I'm not interested in whether he's afraid or not," Coral replied crisply. She could not explain her annoyance at his appearance. He had a right to appear wherever he wished, but— She flushed when she realized that her annoyance might be caused by the fact that she had been thinking about him at the moment Mildred had grasped her arm.

THE next day she found that it was necessary to drive to Westchester. She had left her green felt hat at Marcia Roe's. Marcia Roe lived just beyond Delton.

She got her green felt hat and drove back. On the outskirts of Delton, she slowed up a little. She pressed her foot on the accelerator. The speedster responded with a little moan of pain, choked and the motor died apologetically. Coral looked at her gasoline gauge. It stood at exactly zero. The needle was still trembling as though it was afraid Coral would be angry.

She could hardly be angry, though, when she had deliberately turned the little valve controlling the gasoline while she was at Marcia's. At least four gallons of gasoline had been wasted on the ground. Coral had wasted a little more than she had wanted to. The engine *should* have died three blocks farther.

Coral said, "Oh, darn." She walked around and surveyed the speedster with annoyed glances. She was going to look pretty silly when she walked into that gas station and asked for a can to carry gasoline back. There was nothing else to do.

Fifteen minutes later, after powdering her nose in the windshield mirror, she walked up the incline to the station. The gasoline station tender was sitting outside the station, tilted back in a chair. He grinned as she came up.

"So it's you," he said.

"I ran out of gasoline three blocks down," Coral said coldly. "Give me a five-gallon can."

"What would you do with a five-gallon can?"

"I would fill my car with gasoline!"

"I see. How do you expect to get a five-gallon can full of gasoline three blocks?"

"I expect to carry it," Coral said.

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to take a gallon and come back for the rest?"

"Thank you," Coral said, "but I don't want to come back."

His eyes twinkled. He disappeared into the station and returned with a red can about half Coral's size. Coral gasped when she saw it. How could she *ever* carry it?

As she looked up to say, "I'll take a smaller one," she caught his eye. There was amusement in that eye. She closed her mouth firmly and stared at him. "Well," she said, "what are you waiting for?"

"For you to say you want one gallon."

"I want five gallons," Coral said.

GRAVELY, he filled the can and told her the price. She paid him and took the handle of the can in her hand. With a mighty effort, she lifted it three inches from the cement and hung on. With a last, scornful look, she staggered down the incline, ten steps down the street toward the speedster and collapsed just out of sight of the station.

She sat on some one's front lawn and wept resentful tears. She could not carry that horrible can another step. She couldn't go back and ask him for another because he'd laugh at her, so she just sat there and mopped up the tears with the corner of her red scarf.

The red scarf was the impractical sort of scarf which, when wet, gets kittenish. Where she rubbed it across her cheeks and under her eyes, large red streaks appeared. There were two red streaks running the length of her left cheek, and one running halfway down her right and her eyes were red—in fact, scarlet—down to her cheek bones.

Footsteps were approaching. Coral ducked her head and kept right on dabbing with the red scarf. The feet stopped, and a voice said, "Better than I expected. Shall I take it on for you?"

Coral looked up. "Go away," she said, in a tense, strained little voice. "I hate you. Go right away. I'll carry it in my cupped hands first."

He sat down beside her. "Why do you hate me?"

"Because you laugh at me, and because you're snooty, and because you think you're better than anybody else, and because—because I hate you."

"I see," he said, "but what has that to do with getting the gasoline can to your car?"

"Nothing," Coral said furiously, "except that I don't want to be near you that long."

"Umm," he agreed. He looked at her. A smile trembled at the corners of his mouth.

Suddenly he choked and began to laugh. "Honestly," he said, "you look funny. You really do look funny." He pulled a clean linen handkerchief from his pocket and took her chin in one hand.

Coral jerked free. "Let me alone!"

"But your face!" he said.

"Never mind my face. It's good enough for everybody else."

"Not like this."

"Who are you to tell me whether I can wear powder or not?" she demanded, jumping up. "You—you gasoline station tender!"

"Now who's snooty?"

"Go back to your gasoline tanks!" She stamped her foot so hard it hurt

and she had to stand on the other one. He stood up beside her, still smiling.

Without a word, he bent over and picked up the gasoline can. He walked away, leaving it to her discretion whether she would follow or not. When he had gone a block, she started walking slowly in the direction of the speedster. When she got there he had emptied the can and started back.

He stopped beside her. "You looked very beautiful last night," he said.

"My make-up under artificial lights is better, then."

He looked at the sidewalk for a moment and then sighed. "I see you do hate me," he said. "I'm sorry. I just wanted to tell you that you did look beautiful."

JUST then another roadster drew up along the curb and the long whine of a horn sounded in their ears. It was Mildred Mott. She gave Coral a meaning look. "Why, Coral, my *dear,*" she cried, "what are you doing here?"

"I drove out to Marcia Roe's to get my green hat," Coral told her.

"Oh." Mildred looked at Dan Jeffrey. Coral said, "I ran out of gasoline."

"Isn't that funny? I'm almost out of gas myself." As Coral approached the car, Mildred began to laugh. Dan Jeffrey had walked back toward the station. Mildred said, "What's the matter with your face?"

"Well, what is?"

"Look at it." Mildred tilted the mirror. Coral looked in it, moaned and covered her eyes.

"Have you any water?" she asked, finally.

"Here." Mildred fished in the pocket of the car and handed her a thermos bottle. "I'm going up and get my gas," she said. "Wait for me. I'll follow you in."

Mildred was gone a long time. Coral got in her speedster and stepped on the starter viciously. She drew up by the incline and pressed her horn. Dan and Mildred were talking.

Mildred waved in answer, smiled at Dan and zoomed down the driveway. Coral took the lead into New York, with Mildred speeding behind her. On the outskirts, Mildred's car nosed up beside Coral's in the traffic. She leaned over and said, "Stop at my apartment and we'll have tea."

"Can't," Coral said. "Anthony's waiting for me at home."

"I'll see you at the game to-morrow afternoon, then."

"Yes."

"Going with Brander?"

"Yes."

"That chap at the station asked me your name. I told him. Do you mind?"

"What good would it do me if I did?"

"I thought as long as you'd driven out there to see him you wouldn't mind," Mildred said.

"Who said I drove out there to see him?"

"Well, I know you said night before last that you weren't going to wear that green—"

The traffic light changed and Coral followed her line with tears of anger in her eyes. She hoped that she never saw the gasoline station tender again.

WHEN she reached home, she peeked in the library. Anthony was sitting there with a worried look on his face. He looked up with a weary smile. "Your cheeks are pink from the wind," he said.

"No they aren't," Coral denied.

"They're pink from talking to that gasoline station man."

"Coral, have you been out there again?"

"Yes, Anthony."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I wish I did." She rang for tea and took her things off. "You look worried, Anthony," she said.

"I am a little anxious. It's nothing for you to bother your head about, though, Coral. Just business."

"Are things going badly, Anthony?"

"Well—they may be. I can't tell yet." He smiled and chucked her under the chin. "How would you like to live in a two-room apartment and take busses?"

"I'd live in a tent with you, Anthony, and walk."

"What a nice child. Well, we'll never live in a tent. I prefer modern plumbing."

"Softy. Now tell me the worry."

"Let's not talk about it until it's a menace. As yet it's only a faint disturbance."

"Well, when it becomes a menace, I'll marry some honest young mechanic and—"

"Or gasoline station tender," Anthony said.

"Never. I loathe that man."

"And yet you drive to Delton to find out how much you loathe him," said Anthony.

"You're a pretty wise father," Coral said, looking at him out of the corner of her eye.

"Now I should say 'I was young once myself,'" Anthony grimaced.

Before she left him that evening, Coral was worried about Anthony's affairs. He didn't talk much, but knowing her father as she did, Coral knew that he did not worry about unimportant things. Anthony was in trouble of some sort.

SHE did not see him the following morning before she went to the Princeton game. He had left the apartment early and gone to his office.

Coral wore an angora suit with a fuzzy little brushed wool hat. She carried her fur coat across her arm in case the stands were chilly. It was a brisk November day, clear and bright.

Coral snuggled into Brander's roadster, tucked her fur coat around her knees and murmured, "Okay. Princeton's going to ruin you to-day, Yale man."

"Think so?"

"I know so."

"How do you know?"

"Woman's intuition."

"Worried about something, aren't you, baby?"

"I'm worried about Anthony. I'm afraid he's been reckless again. Anthony's always been a fool for luck. He's always come out ahead in spite of his recklessness. I'm afraid that he's been reckless once too often."

"The market's been going down steadily for the past two weeks."

"Has it?"

"Has he invested heavily?"

"Anthony always stakes his last dime on a hunch. He is in to his neck, no doubt."

The crowds at Princeton were colorful and gay. Dark green felt hats bobbed along between soft gray felts. Eager little faces were turned up adoringly to handsome dark faces. Every one carried small pennants. The gayly colored felt hats of the girls sported orange feathers marked Princeton, and blue feathers marked Yale. Men shouted unintelligible things and waved hot dog buns.

The stands were filled to overflowing. Crowds poured up the ramps like excited butterflies and settled in their seats. The hum of voices became a roar. Brander looked around at the colorful throng of spectators.

"There's old Tommy two rows behind us," he said. "You remember Tommy Blout, don't you? Lillian's brother—just back from the West."

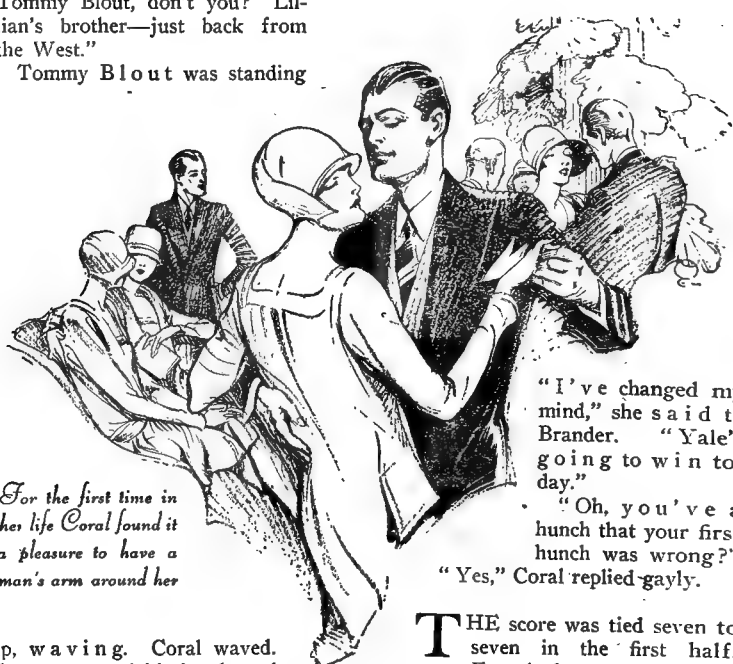
Tommy Blout was standing up, waving. Coral waved. Tommy cupped his hands and called "Yea—*Coral!*"

Coral smiled. She called back, "See you at the Den after the game!"

She stood up and looked around. Familiar faces greeted her eyes everywhere. Suddenly she stiffened. Could it be—

Yes, it was. The gasoline station man was sitting in the fourth row behind her munching an apple. He was dressed in a baggy tweed top coat and his hat was crushed into an absurd shape. He seemed serenely unconscious of it. While she looked, he caught her eyes. He waved the apple and grinned. She noticed that he wore a small orange pennant marked Princeton.

She sat down breathing heavily.



For the first time in her life Coral found it a pleasure to have a man's arm around her

"I've changed my mind," she said to Brander. "Yale's going to win today."

"Oh, you've a hunch that your first hunch was wrong?"

"Yes," Coral replied gayly.

THE score was tied seven to seven in the first half. Everybody stood up to stretch. Coral saw Mildred Mott at the entrance to the ramp, motioning for her to join them. She squeezed past Brander and went over to Mildred. "Yes, I know," she said, "he's here."

"I asked him to come over to the Den after the game," Mildred announced. "Every one's going to be there."

"Why did you do that? You don't know the man."

"No, but I want to!"

"Well, I think it's silly," Coral said. "He doesn't know what we're all about. This is his afternoon off."

"He'll soon get acquainted with us. I want him to tell us all about why he's working in a gasoline station. I think it will be amusing."

"Oh, by all means make him bare his life's secrets," Coral agreed.

"Don't be so—so cross, Coral."

"Well, I think it's silly."

"You know you like him."

"I don't like him. I loathe him. He's conceited and—and he makes fun of me."

"That must be funny," Mildred said. "I think he'll be amusing."

"If you enjoy being made fun of, it's all right with me."

Coral went back to her seat. At the end of the game the score stood 14 to 7 in favor of Princeton. She stole a glance over her shoulder. The gasoline station man was standing on his seat, bareheaded, crushing the gray felt hat into an even more hopelessly unrecognizable mass. His voice was husky from shouting, but she could hear his shouts of approval that Princeton had triumphed.

She grabbed her coat and said to Brander, "Come on."

They went to the Den. The door was crowded. The victrola was playing inside and people were dancing. The davenports around the sides of the room were crowded with excited little girls and matter-of-fact men. An enthusiastic crowd was gathered in one corner enlarging on what Yale would do to Princeton the following year.

Coral threw her coat at one of the boys and slipped into Brander's arms to dance.

A few moments later, she saw Mildred dancing with the gasoline station man. She looked away. He danced well. Mildred seemed to be enjoying herself.

When that dance was finished, he came over to Coral. "I only came here to-day," he said simply, "because I wanted to see you. I thought perhaps you'd dance with me."

"I—I'm going home now," answered Coral. "I'm sorry."

He put his hand on her arm. "Why do you hate me so?" he asked.

"Don't be silly. I don't hate you."

"Why do you snub me? Is it because I work in a gasoline station?"

"Of course not."

"Then why? Tell me. I—I think you're awfully sweet and pretty. I'd like to know you."

"You make fun of me," Coral said, like a willful child.

HE put his head back and laughed. He was so good-looking when he laughed that Coral wanted to laugh, too. He said, "You know you did look funny that day. All that red stuff—didn't you, now?"

"I suppose I did," she admitted.

"And I didn't try to make fun of you. I simply tried to wipe it off. You wouldn't let me."

"You made me take that darned five-gallon can," said Coral.

"I tried to persuade you not to. You wouldn't listen to me."

"It was just the way you looked. I didn't like it."

"My face is all right when you get used to it," he said. "Will you dance with me now?"

For the first time in her life, Coral found it a pleasure to have a man's arms around her while she was dancing. Brander watched them from the

other side of the room. He touched Mildred Mott's arm. "Who's the chap?" he asked. "Coral looks entranced. I never saw her eyes shine that way when she looked at me."

"His name is Jeffrey. He's very wealthy, I hear, and he works in a gasoline station at Delton."

"Oh, it's the gasoline man."

"Isn't he handsome?"

"He's all right," Brander said.

"Coral wouldn't admit it, but she's gone about him."

"Don't be silly."

"All right. But I'm telling you it's the first time I ever saw Coral interested in a man."

"What's she going to do about it? She can't marry a—a gasoline station attendant."

"He's wealthy—and anyway, whether he was or not, you never can tell what Coral will do. You know that."

"I know. I wish I could."

She went home with Brander, but her thoughts were with Daniel Jeffrey. Daniel Jeffrey who wound the arm of a gasoline pump around and around, watching a gauge. What was the matter with her? She felt that she was living.

When they hit New York City, she saw it with different eyes. Instead of being a city of teeming, tired people, crowding each other, stepping on each other's toes and snarling insults, she saw pleasant faces smiling, eager to get to their homes. The buildings were no longer prosaic office structures housing bored stenographers and impatient employers. They were now gold-tipped castles with strangely pleasant humans inside.

She found Anthony there, looking wearier than ever before. He asked her perfunctorily about the game. She saw a distant look in his fifty-year-old eyes. He was not thinking about the game. He was thinking about little white stretches of tape with numbers and fractions on them. Before, Anthony had been as eager as a child about the outcome of the games.

"Anthony," she said, "tell me about it. You'll feel better if you talk about it."

"Steel is acting up," Anthony said. "I really don't want to talk about it, darling. Did you have a nice time?"

"Ye-es," Coral said. "I saw the gasoline man again to-day, Anthony."

"That man seems to be everywhere at once," said Anthony. "Are you in love, pussy-cat?"

"I'm afraid I am, Anthony."

"What a strange child."

"He's coming to call to-morrow night," Coral said.

THE following night she dressed carefully. Blue gray dress, a sapphire pendant, blue gray shoes and a wisp of a blue chiffon handkerchief. Anthony was closeted in the study when she came down. She poked her head in and said, "May I enter?"

"Please do," said Anthony. "How blue you are!"

"Aren't I nice?"

"All for a gasoline man," Anthony sighed. "Do you think I'll be asked for your hand to-night?"

"Not to-night."

He came at nine. They sat across from one another in the living room and stared at each other. Suddenly he leaned forward. "You are the most exquisite thing I've ever seen," he said. "I—I think I'm in love with you. I'm as surprised as you are."

Coral's heart was beating very fast. She felt actually feverish. Her voice choked in her throat and came out in a

gasping little laugh. She was so bewildered and embarrassed that she could not stop. She laughed until the tears rolled down her cheeks and she had to wipe them away with the blue wisp of chiffon. He watched her and said finally, "It is comic, isn't it?"

"I can't help it," Coral stammered.

"I don't blame you," Jeffrey said bitterly. "Consider it unsaid. I didn't mean to embarrass you. I was carried away by my enthusiasm."

"I—see," Coral said.

They started talking of something else and kept up a frantic conversation until Anthony came in. Anthony was charming. Coral felt that he was there and he was solid. He was something to cling to. She needed something to cling to.

Dan and Anthony liked each other at once. Anthony told Dan about his troubles in the market and Dan commented upon them intelligently. "You see," Anthony said, with a funny little quirk at the corners of his mouth, "I may be a pauper any minute."

Dan's eyes met Coral's. Dan smiled slowly. "Well, Mr. Trent," he said, "there are lots worse things than poverty."

Coral knew what he meant. If her father lost his money, Dan would have a right to ask her to marry him. He loved her. She wanted to reach out and touch him, tell him that she had not been laughing because of what he had said, but because something had burst within her and turned to laughter when he said it. He left at eleven with a murmured word of thanks for a pleasant evening.

Anthony looked at Coral. "I like that young man," he said. "I approve of him heartily."

"I dished things to-night, Anthony. He told me he loved me and I laughed. I just started to laugh and couldn't stop."

"Why did you start? I can't see that it's a laughing matter when a man tells you he loves you."

"I laughed because I had to do something and I couldn't think of anything to say."

"A very good thing to say would be 'I love you, too,'" said Anthony. "It's the first time I ever heard of you being speechless, Coral."

"It's the first time I've ever been in love," said Coral. "Maybe that's the answer."

IT happened four days later. Mildred Mott had invited Dan to a theater party. Coral, Brander, Bart, Lillian Blout and her brother were also present. After the play, they went to Mildred's house for supper. Coral wore a flame-colored taffeta dress and an ermine wrap. Her frock and coat represented two years' work at the pump of a gasoline station.

Mildred served the rarebit on small tables for two. The party was very informal. Dan could not keep his eyes off Coral. Suddenly, when there was a lull in the conversation, Mildred said, "Mr. Jeffrey—there's something I've been dying to ask you ever since I first met you."

"I'm a Democrat," Dan said.

"It's not about politics. It's about yourself."

"Ah, you want to know about my ideal girl!"

"I want to know why—when you have more money than any of us—you work in a gasoline station."

Coral opened her mouth to say that it had started as a joke, and that Mildred had jumped to a conclusion about a chance remark. Dan's eyes had a funny expression.

He hadn't denied it! He wasn't going to deny it! He was a cheat—a poseur.

Coral closed her lips tightly, and her hands clenched under the table. Surely she hadn't been mistaken in him. Surely he had the courage to tell the truth—

Dan said, "Who told you that, Miss Mott?"

A little shuddering sigh of relief escaped Coral's lips.

Mildred said, "A little bird."

Dan looked at Coral. "Well," he said, "it's this way. I like it."

"Even when you could afford to do nothing?"

"Even though I can afford to do nothing," Dan said.

Coral stared straight ahead of her for a moment. She could feel Brander's eyes on her.

She rose so suddenly that her purse slipped from her lap and landed on the floor with an ominous tinkle. Brander said, "There goes your opera glass."

"You're not going, Coral?"

"Yes—I'm going."

"Why?" Dan asked.

Coral looked straight through him. She said in a voice so low that no one else heard, "Because I hate you."

She went home and wept for an hour. Anthony, in the adjoining room, heard her wild sobs. He slipped into his bathrobe and knocked on her door. She admitted him with her eyes red-rimmed and swollen. He sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Now what?" he said.

Coral threw herself in his arms. "He's a cheat," she wailed. "A contemptible cheat! He's ashamed of being poor and he let them think that he's wealthy and that he's working at that—that—"

"Gasoline station," Anthony said.

"Yes—because he likes it. Oh, Anthony—I thought he was brave and honest—and—and—"

"That was pretty bad," Anthony said slowly. "One shouldn't be ashamed of poverty."

"Anthony, suppose you were in love with some one and you found out that she'd told a wretched lie and that she wasn't what you thought she was—what would you do?"

"I don't know," Anthony said. "I guess I'd stop loving her."

Coral shuddered. "That's awfully easy to say," she said.

He patted her shoulder and put her in bed. He brought cold cloths and bathed her eyes. He rubbed her head until she fell asleep, exhausted by sobs; then he bent and kissed her forehead, turned out her light and tiptoed back into his room to spend the rest of the night over large sheets of paper covered by figures.

AT two o'clock the following day Coral sat in the living room trying to read, trying desperately to get her mind away from Daniel Jeffrey and the incident of the night before.

The maid opened the door, "A Miss Normand is calling, Miss Coral."

"I don't recognize the name."

"She says it is personal and urgent, Miss Coral."

"What does she look like?"

"She is tall, dressed in gray—expensively."

"Send her in."

Miss Normand was young and very beautiful. She fingered the handle of her purse with nervous fingers.

Coral said, "Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you, no. I prefer to stand."

"What can I do for you?"

"It's about Dan Jeffrey. Do you love him?"

"Who are you?" Coral stood up, facing her guest. "What right have you to ask me that?"

"No right. I realize that. I realized it before I came, but I had to come. You see, I love him. I think he was learning to love me—until you came along. It's to his advantage to make a good marriage—I want to marry him. He might marry me if he—if he thought there wasn't a chance for him to marry you."

"You mean that before he met me—there was an understanding between you that you would be married?"

The girl hesitated a moment. Then, very faintly, she said, "Yes."

"You may tell him, for me, that I never want to see him again—that I don't love him—that I never could love him—that I wouldn't marry him if he were the last man on earth."

The girl swayed a little. She was very white. She gave a little half-sob, and said, "Don't—don't ever tell him I was here—I don't want him to know—but I am grateful to you. I thought I'd lost him. It seemed unfair."

"I'm awfully sorry you've suffered over it. Won't you sit down and let me have a cup of tea in for you?"

"I can't do that. I've intruded enough. It was very bold of me, but I was desperate. You can't know how horrible it is to love a man and feel that there isn't a chance—that some one's standing between you."

Coral tried frantically to think of something to say

When she had gone, Coral said to herself, "The cheat—playing one

wealthy girl against another—pretending to love them to marry money. Oh, how I hate him. The fortune hunter! I'm glad I laughed that night. *Glad.*"

ANTHONY didn't come home from the office that night. Coral waited up for him. At ten o'clock she called the office. Anthony answered. She said, "Anthony—what is it?"

"Just work, darling," he returned; "don't worry." But his voice was exhausted, and she felt a panic-stricken quality in his tones.

Then he said, "I'm sorry I didn't call you, Coral—but I've been so busy I couldn't. You're not to worry. Go to bed like a good child. I'll tiptoe in when I come home and say good night."

"Anthony, let me come down and sit with you."

"No, dear. It's dull and business-like down here. You don't belong in a business office. You should be wearing pretty clothes and dancing. Let your old Anthony do the work and you do the playing."

At ten thirty the telephone rang. Coral waited for the maid to answer it, and when she didn't, went out and took the call herself. A masculine voice said, "Coral, where is your father?"

"Who is it?"

"Daniel Jeffrey," he said.

"Please don't call here again, Mr. Jeffrey." Coral hung up the receiver.

The telephone rang again, insistently. Coral was in the living room. The metallic ringing of the telephone bell tore at her frayed nerves. The maid took the call. She came into the doorway. "Mr. Jeffrey is calling," she said. "He says it's imperative that he reaches Mr. Trent, Miss Coral. He says would I please ask you to come to the telephone."

Coral took the telephone and said, "Yes?"

"Coral—don't let your personal hatred of me stand in the way now. Tell me where I can reach your father."

"He has nothing to say to you," Coral said, "and he couldn't possibly have any interest in anything you might say to him."

"Coral—listen—don't hang up." But she had already placed the receiver on the hook again.

Ten minutes later, the doorbell rang. Coral answered it. She half-expected to see Daniel Jeffrey in the doorway. It was a messenger boy. He shoved an envelope at her. The envelope was addressed to Anthony and bore Daniel Jeffrey's return address. Coral held it there in her hands a moment and then ripped it across once, twice. It lay there in four pieces. Approximately the number of pieces her heart was in at the moment. She took the four pieces of the letter in and laid them on Anthony's desk.

SHE waited for him to come home until two o'clock. Worn out, she went up and went to bed. It was four before Anthony tiptoed in to kiss her good night. She sat up and put her arms around him. He held her tight and the tears came to his eyes. His little Coral, brought up in luxury, never wanting for anything—the mental picture he had of her suffering poverty was hard.

She said, "Anthony—I—I tore up a letter addressed to you to-night. I'm sorry."

He held her away. "Why?" he asked.

"It was from Daniel Jeffrey."

"What did it say?"

"I don't know. I didn't open it."

"What could he possibly be writing to me about?"

"I don't know, Anthony. I tried to tell him that over the telephone."

"He probably wants me to intercede for him with you," Anthony said.

"The letter is on your desk," Coral said. "I tore it up and then realized that—that I shouldn't have, and I put the pieces in there."

"I'll look at it to-morrow. I'm tired out, Cora. Will you see that I'm awakened by ten in the morning?"

"Yes, Anthony. It's been such a hard week—can't you sleep later than ten?"

"I shouldn't sleep at all, Cora. I should be down there right now. I couldn't see the figures any longer. My eyes were closing in spite of me."

"Good night, Anthony. Are we going to be paupers?"

"You're not to worry about it. You get your beauty sleep. The world will look much brighter in the morning."

"I don't think the world will ever look bright again," Coral said. "Isn't it silly? His voice over the telephone to-night—oh, Anthony—I can't tell you what it did to me. I wanted to—to cry."

"Perhaps you're misjudging him, chicken."

"No, I'm not misjudging him. There was a Miss Normand here this afternoon. She's wealthy. Awfully pretty and well-dressed, and she says that—that there was an understanding between them before he met me. They were going to get—married."

"You're suffering a lot for no reason at all, aren't you?" Anthony said. "The innocent bystander is always the one to get it in the neck, I guess."

"Here I'm telling you my silly troubles when you're asleep on your feet. We'll talk about it to-morrow, Anthony. Sleep well."

"And you sleep well, blessed baby. Your old Anthony loves you more than anything else in the world."

"I know it, darling. I've that to be glad for, haven't I?"

"Small as it is," Anthony said.

"Good night, dearest."

"Good night, dear."

SHE woke Anthony at ten the following morning. He did not go to his study, but hurried directly to the office. Coral went to a matinée that afternoon and had tea afterward.

When she came home, Anthony was in the living room. He was stretched out in a chair and his eyes were closed. Her heart contracted swiftly with pain at the sight of his tired face. He was thin. He had been working and worrying too hard. She would take him away for a vacation—and she would forget Daniel Jeffrey completely.

She bent over and touched him.

He opened his eyes.

"Hullo, you," Coral said.

"Hello, Cora. It's happened."

"What's happened?"

"I'm cleaned." He said it quietly. His voice did not betray the panic within. "Completely cleaned," he said.

"Why, Anthony—you mean we—we haven't anything?"

"Not a dime," said Anthony, "except your speedster, the furniture and the house in Westchester. Altogether it doesn't total enough to keep us decently for a year. I'm going to get rid of everything and put the money in a trust fund for you."

"You won't do anything of the sort. You'll take it and make some more money, Anthony. I—I can get along without anything. Why, I have clothes enough to last for *years*. I'll take a job

as a stenographer or—or well, I'll take a position of some sort."

"Funny baby" Anthony said. "Do you think that tiny bit of money will do me any good? I'm fifty years old, Coral. I've had the best that life offers. I don't mind for myself. It's for you. You're young and—and you deserve the best there is. It hurts me to think I can't give it to you any more."

"Don't you let it. I'll love being poor."

"You won't love it for long, child."

"Anthony, let's figure out a budget."

"Anything to keep my mind off other things," Anthony said.

Arm in arm, they walked into the study. Coral stopped short. "There's that letter from Dan Jeffrey. Shall I throw it away?"

"Never throw anything away without reading it," Anthony said. "If you're too angry to watch me read it, you turn your back while I play picture puzzle. It won't take a minute. If I think it's something you wouldn't want to hear, I'll just chuck it and we won't speak of it again."

Coral went over to the other side of the room and sat down. She watched Anthony's face. Incredulity spread over it and then a spasm of pain.

"Anthony! What is it?"

"It's nothing," he said hastily. "You—you wouldn't want to read it." He tossed the pieces in the waste basket.

"Tell me what it was, Anthony."

"I'd rather not, chicken. As I said, you wouldn't want to know what it was."

They figured over a budget. Coral saw Anthony's eyes steal to the waste basket every now and then. What was in that letter? She dared not let Anthony see that she wanted to know. For reasons of his own, he might destroy it.

THAT night, after discussing plans with Anthony until her head whirled, Coral lay awake and rigid waiting for sleep to overtake her father in the next room.

When his room was dark and quiet, she slipped out of bed and into a negligee. She crept downstairs and closed the door of the study behind her. Sitting down at Anthony's desk, she took the waste paper basket on her lap and went through its contents. She found the four pieces of the letter and laid them out on the desk before her. Painstakingly, she pieced them together. When it was finished, she saw a long slip of paper reading:

> Pay to the order of Anthony Trent, $15,000. Fifteen thousand and no one-hundredths dollars.
> (Signed) DANIEL JEFFREY.

Beside it was a short note. The note said:

DEAR MR. TRENT:

After our talk the other night I investigated R. & M. copper. You told me that to-day would settle your affairs one way or another. I have it on good authority that R. & M. is due for a rise if you can hang on for two more days. Enclosed you will find a check which, I hope, will help cover your margin. If it is not sufficient, please do not hesitate to call upon me. R. & M. will more than take care of any loan you request.

If you care to communicate with me, I will wait until four o'clock to hear from you.

Sincerely,
DANIEL JEFFREY.

Coral's head went down on her arms. Daniel Jeffrey was no liar.

She had ruined Anthony.

Her pride had taken comfort from him in his old age. She wept quietly

ınd drearily. The tears soaked the ›ieces of the check and the note. She ›icked them up and kissed them. Dan-el Jeffrey was no liar. She loved Dan-el Jeffrey. She loved him so much hat she would have crawled to him on ıer hands and knees to beg his forgive-ıess.

Anthony was a pauper, now. Their positions were switched. She had no right to go to him. In the two short gestures that it had taken to tear his letter up, she had ruined her life.

There was still the Normand girl to think of.

She wiped the tears from her cheeks and took an envelope from one of the pigeonholes in Anthony's desk. She would not mail this note until she had left the apartment for good, but Daniel Jeffrey must know what she had done. She placed the pieces of the check and the note in the envelope, and in her large, childish handwriting wrote a tear-blotted letter.

DEAR DANIEL JEFFREY:

When you receive this you will know that Anthony has gone down for the last time. You must know, too, that he did not reject your offer of help. I did that. I tore your letter up without reading it.

I wish I might tell you how sorry I am —not only for that, but for my judgment of you. You see, I thought you lied that night at Mildred's. When you said you worked in a gasoline station because you liked it, I hated you for being ashamed of poverty.

Now that you will never see me again, I can tell you that I love you. I loved you that night I laughed.

Miss Normand called on me the day I received your letter. She told me of your plans for marriage. I hope you will be very, very happy, and that some day you will be able to forgive me.

CORAL.

And a week later she slipped the note in the mail box on the corner, shoved her small hands in her coat pockets and trudged in the direction of the subway on her way to a cheap uptown apartment which Anthony had taken.

Anthony was there waiting for her, sitting in the middle of the room with a bewildered expression. All around him was a miscellany of cheap, shoddy furniture. When Coral came in the door he said brokenly, "Coral—Coral, my child, how can I let you live in this? How *can* I?"

"Why, Anthony, it's going to be fun!" She ran across the room and took his head in her arms. His shoulders shook and he kept his head buried there. Anthony had not realized that it would be as hard as this.

AFTER long, weary days of searching, he found a position. It paid very little, and the work was hard. He came home nights weary and worn from bending over columns of figures dealing with other men's success.

Coral's heart bled for him. She cooked his meals and cried—alone—for the burns and aches that went with the unaccustomed drudgery.

She kept the place spotless, greeting him every night with an account of the fun she had had during the day, fixing custards and roasting meats. If there was nothing amusing to tell him, she made it up. Her heart was sick with fear. Anthony looked ill. Once when he crossed the room to her, she had to put mental hands over her mouth to keep from crying out.

They were very brave in each other's company, pretending that it was great fun, and that they had never had as much pleasure being wealthy.

Coral could not help thinking of Daniel Jeffrey. Where was he? What was he thinking of? Did he ever think

of her? Was he married to the Normand girl? She tortured herself day and night, remembering.

Days, when she had time, she looked for a position. She was going to work part time, keeping it from Anthony, to help out on the household expenses, which were a strain.

But no employer wanted a girl without experience for three hours a day. Finally she found a firm who gave her stacks of envelopes to be addressed as piece work. She hurried through her housework each morning to sit down for three hours scribbling addresses which would bring a meager five dollars at the end of the week.

Her eyes and arms ached until she could scarcely drag herself to the stove to cook her father's dinner. Anthony watched her with troubled eyes. She was getting thin. One night he said, "Cora—I want you to go away on a vacation. You're not looking well."

"Go away and leave you alone?" Coral said.

"I'll manage," Anthony told her. "I'm a prize cook."

"No, darling. There isn't a place in the world I want to go, honestly. I'm having so much fun here, cooking for you and waiting for you to come home nights that I couldn't bear to leave it."

He dropped miserable eyes to his plate. "I can get the money, Coral," he said, low-voiced. "I can borrow money and pay it back a little at a time. I—I think I'd like to be alone for awhile. We're living in such close quarters, you know. I'm not used to it. It makes me nervous."

Darling Anthony, sitting there lying to her, trying to send her away for her own good, knowing that every day she was away from him would be a separate death!

She said, "Anthony, you're lying. You know you're lying. Be as nervous as you like. I won't stir from here."

"I saw Daniel Jeffrey to-day," watching her as he spoke.

Coral went white and clutched at the edge of the table.

"W-what did he say?"

"He didn't see me. I—I didn't want him to. I thought you wouldn't either."

Her lips trembled into a smile. "How did he look, Anthony?"

"Sick and worried," Anthony said.

Coral took a mouthful of soup and choked on it. "It— It's been a nice day, hasn't it, Anthony?"

"A little cold," Anthony said, "but nice, yes."

THAT night he found her envelopes, stacked in neat little piles in the kitchen cupboard. He took them out with trembling hands and stared at them. Coral stood in the center of the kitchen, trying frantically to think of something to say. He did not give her a chance. He looked at her once and cried, "Coral baby!" and then ripped them in two, methodically, and dropped them in the trash basket.

He came over and picked her up in his arms. "What do your ill-gotten gains amount to?" he asked, gently.

"T-ten dollars, so far," Coral said.

Anthony reached in his pocket and pulled out a ten-dollar bill—his lunch and car fare money for the week. "Here, dear," he said, "this will take care of that."

And the next night, he came home with the announcement that the firm he worked for was taking inventory and that he would have to work a few weeks at night.

Coral never knew that Anthony was

working nights as an accountant to make more money.

That went on for four weeks. Anthony collapsed at the end of those four harrowing weeks and was put in bed under the doctor's care.

Coral faced the fact that they had no money for doctor bills, no money for food, and that the rent would be due in another week. She could not leave Anthony's bedside a moment. The doctor advised that Anthony be sent to the hospital. He was taken away in the morning.

That afternoon Coral found work. There had been an advertisement in the *Times* for a lady chauffeur. Her employer was a maiden lady who loathed and detested men. She carried it to the point of refusing to employ a man in any capacity. An ardent feminist, she believed that what men could do, a woman could do also.

At every opportunity Coral stole away and hurried to the hospital to see Anthony. He was worried about money. Coral told him glowing tales about her new position. She doubled her salary and described an enviable situation.

"But, Coral darling—you can't like working," Anthony groaned.

"Anthony, it's priceless fun. Miss Bell is sweet to me, and there's very little work, really."

Miss Bell was so sweet to Coral that Coral had seen her smile but once, and that was when a traffic officer had scolded her new chauffeur.

THEN one day they drove to Westchester. Coral flew through Delton on the wings of the wind, with Miss Bell screaming at her.

On their return, approaching Delton, Miss Bell leaned forward and said, "Drive more slowly, Miss Trent."

Coral ducked her head and kept it turned in one direction.

A block from the gasoline station, the motor choked and died.

Miss Bell leaned forward. "What is the matter now?" she asked.

"I don't know," Coral muttered despairingly.

"Have you enough gasoline?"

"The tank is half full," Coral said.

"We'll have to have a repairman. Go down to the corner and get one from that gasoline station."

"Miss Bell—" Coral choked. "I—I think they have very inferior repairmen at that station. Let me call some one else."

"It is probably a minor repair that an inferior man can handle. Please do as I say."

"I—I can't go down there," Coral said, panic-stricken.

"You will either obey my orders, Miss Trent, or I will be forced to get some one who will."

Anthony lying sick in the hospital. There wasn't another eccentric in New York who would hire a woman driver!

Coral swallowed hard. "I'll go," she said faintly. She got out, slammed the car door, took a deep breath. She tried not to think as she approached the station.

She walked up the incline. Dan Jeffrey was drawing gasoline for an Auburn roadster. He looked around—and dropped the hose.

He started toward her.

"Coral!" he choked. "I knew you'd come. I knew it. Oh, Coral—I've waited every day. Every day, when I woke up, I said 'this is the day. She'll come to-day' and every day when you didn't, I said 'Well, to-morrow. She'll surely come to-morrow.'"

"And I never came," Coral said, with her heart in her eyes.

"You never came," Dan said. He held out his arms.

She shook her head. "I came to get a repairman," faintly.

"I'm a repairman," Dan said. "I repair cars and hearts. What will you have?"

"The car part," Coral said.

"Hey," a voice cried from the Auburn roadster, "I want my gasoline!"

Dan went back and drew it. He came back to Coral. They were alone. "I haven't been able to understand," he said. "I searched everywhere. I asked every one who had ever known you. None of them knew your address."

"No," Coral said. "Dan—I have to go back with a repairman."

"You mean you haven't even time to talk to me? That's not asking much."

"I'm a chauffeur now," Coral said. "I—I'm not allowed to waste time talking to gasoline station attendants."

"A chauffeur?"

"I drive for a woman," said Coral, "and she wants a repairman. She's waiting a block down."

"Where is Anthony?"

"He's in the hospital," Coral said. "He's been working too hard."

Dan caught her in his arms. "Baby," he said huskily, "if you'd only come before, I could have saved you all this!"

"How could I? You were engaged to be married, and—and—I hadn't believed in you, and—"

"I have never been engaged to be married," Dan said. "Miss Normand—stretched the truth a little for her own sake. Where is this car?"

"It's about a block down the road," the girl responded.

"We'll settle that first," Dan said grimly.

Miss Bell saw a dark, angry young face peering over the door of her car. She said, "Young man, fix this car at once. I must get back to New York."

"I called for a man to fix your car," Dan said, "and he's going to drive you back to New York. You'll have to find a new driver. Miss Trent is not coming back."

"Where is Miss Trent?"

"Miss Trent is waiting for me," Daniel said, "and she's going to be too busy during the next four hours to drive any one anywhere."

"Young man, what right have you to—"

"Only the right of a future husband, Miss Bell. I don't fancy the idea of my wife piloting a car around New York for any one."

Before Miss Bell could think of anything to say Dan was gone, running in the direction of the gasoline station.

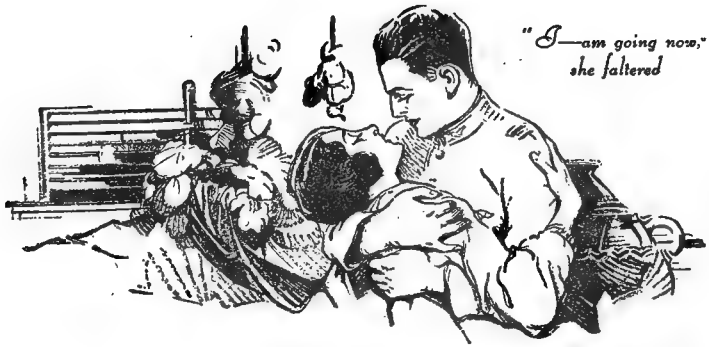
Coral was waiting for him. Her eyes were shining. "Honey," he said, "take your choice. Do we go to Anthony first or do we get married?"

"Anthony," Coral said.

"And honey—what fun Anthony's going to have in the market when he gets well! It's cutting capers again!"

"I've learned to cook," Coral said, against his overalls.

"You're going to be too busy to cook," Dan told her softly. "I've got things planned. Oh, Coral, I've had so long to plan things—never knowing whether they'd come true or not—"



"I—am going now," she faltered

Crisis

An absorbing story of two very human hearts and what life taught them of each other

By Mary Strother Chambers

THE Navy shore launch, trim in its spotless gray paint and glistening brasswork, nosed against the side of the airplane carrier *Concord* as she swung at anchor on the blue waters of Limon Bay.

When the launch had been made fast, a girl, slim and graceful in cool yellow chiffon, stepped over the side onto the landing platform. Her face, shaded by a wide-brimmed yellow hat, was deeply tanned from the Colon sun. There was a tender smile on her full young lips, a light of joyful expectancy in her dark eyes as she ran lightly up the accommodation ladder.

A tall, stalwart two-striper doffed his white cap and came forward as the girl gained the quarter-deck.

"Ah, Terry," he said eagerly, clasping both her slender hands. "I've met every shore boat for the last hour. I thought you'd never get here!"

The girl's smile was slow and sweet.

"I'm sorry, Alec. But Captain and Mrs. Truman dropped in and I couldn't get away any sooner. I can't run out on captains, you know, when I'm marrying a mere lieutenant."

Lieutenant Alec Sander grinned. "No, it isn't being done," he agreed. "And, worse luck, dear, I'm tied up with some confounded paper work. I need about twenty minutes more to finish it before I can give you tea. What do you want to do, wait in the reception room or go up on the landing deck until I'm through?"

Go gle

"The landing deck, by all means," the girl decided. "What little breeze there is will be up there."

The young officer slipped a hand beneath her elbow. "Up you go, then. And the sooner you're there, the quicker I'll be able to join you. Sweetheart, you remind me of buttercups and California poppies in that dress. It makes me homesick to look at you."

Terry Colfax laughed gayly as they started up the ladder to the landing deck, four decks above. "That's not the way to feel when you look at me, Alec."

"That's just one of the ways I feel," the lieutenant answered. "Want to hear the others, Terry? Looking at you makes me—"

"Hush!" exclaimed the girl. "There are a million ears aboard a ship. I just can't share your love words with so many. Save them up till we're alone."

"There are other things I'd rather do when we're alone," objected Sander.

"For instance?"

They were passing through a short, unoccupied companionway.

"This," said the lieutenant, and, bending down, touched his lips to hers in a quick, hard kiss.

Then, as a white-clad sailor hove into sight, he grasped her arm again and sedately helped her up the next ladder.

On the broad, bare landing deck Lieutenant Sander released Terry's arm reluctantly. "I'll be up just as soon as I can, sweetheart. I'm sorry as the dickens I couldn't finish before you got here."

"Twenty minutes isn't very long," said Terry. "I'll be just the same when you come back."

"You'll be adorable," said Sander, and dived down the ladder.

TERRY strolled lazily along the hot, wooden deck. A faint breeze from the sea set her chiffon skirt to rippling, stirred the tendrils of dark hair that clung to her smooth, flushed cheeks.

All about her were officers and enlisted men talking and walking with their girls. Out on the blue waters of the bay, gray battleships loomed huge and black against the cloudless sky. Grimy little trading schooners and fishing boats darted among them like Lilliputians zigzagging between skyscrapers.

To the southward the bay narrowed sharply to the entrance of the Panama Canal, whose tall, range-light towers loomed up like white minarets of an unseen mosque. A huge transcontinental liner was nosing its stately way between the narrow banks, and a tiny Indian *cayuco* skimmed impudently past its black stern. Terry leaned over the rail to watch the dugout's progress.

"Isn't it interestin'," said a slow, soft voice at her side, "to wonder where those lil *cayucos* come from and where they're goin' back to?"

Terry turned, startled.

A white-clad sailor, wearing a revolver belt strapped around his waist, stood looking down at her. His white cap was perched at an extremely seagoing angle on his curly, dark head. His eyes, merry and blue and surrounded by lashes any girl might envy, were gazing at her with admiration. On his boyish mouth there was a questioning smile.

Terry's first impulse was to turn coldly away from him and resume her interrupted contemplation of the bay.

The impertinence of a sailor's daring to speak to her!

But something about his odd little smile made her pause.

Undoubtedly he thought her a relative or a friend of one of his shipmates. It wasn't customary for an officer's lady to wander about the landing deck alone. The boy hadn't meant to be impudent. He was on watch and was evidently lonely among all the couples about him.

So instead of turning haughtily away, Terry surprised herself by smiling back at him.

"Haven't you ever been down in the San Blas Islands where the *cayucos* are born?" she asked.

The boy shook his head. "Nevah been any place down here but on this battle wagon," he answered. "Ah gets my first liberty to-morrow night."

A Texan, Terry decided. She glanced at his rating. An airplane mechanic. What, she thought with inward amusement, would Alec say?

"If you're going ashore for the first time," she observed, "you'll have a lot to see."

"That's what the boys tell me. But I'm not so much interested in Colon. Tell me about those islands where the *cayucos* come from."

SO Terry told him about the myriad islands, like islets in a Japanese tea garden, that are scattered down the coast of Panama from Colon to Colombia; islands that are occupied by small, spindle-legged brown men and women. She told him about the big bamboo huts where the *cayucos* are carved out of logs and where their size is measured, not in prosaic feet, but by the number of coconuts they can carry.

She watched his blue eyes darken with interest as she talked. She sensed that here was the born adventurer, whose soul was the restless soul of the rover and whose heart was the eager heart of the romanticist.

"Gee, I'd like to go there!" he exclaimed when she had finished.

He leaned against the rail for a moment. Then he glanced at her quizzically.

"I don't know who you are," he said, "and I reckon maybe you don't care who I am. But—I get my first liberty to-morrow night—and I'd love to have somebody like you to spend it with. Would you consider—explorin' Colon with me?"

Terry caught her breath. He was presuming too far. It was time for her to put this young upstart in his place.

But she looked into his eager, boyish eyes and her heart misgave her. Why hurt him? He hadn't been insolent, and somehow, as his candid gaze met hers, she knew he would never be insolent.

His vibrant, arrogant youth touched a part of her that seldom came to the surface in her stilted, convention-bound Navy life. She wanted suddenly to put her hand in his and tell him they'd explore all that hot, romantic country together!

"No, you haven't offended me," said Terry breathlessly. "I was—I was just considering. What — what time do you get liberty?"

"Eight thirty," he said eagerly.

Terry's voice was very low. "I'll meet you—in the garden of the Strangers' Club at nine o'clock. Perhaps I can only see you for a few minutes—but I'll be there at nine."

Without another glance at him she turned and walked quickly down the deck.

She put one hand to her hot face, gropingly. What a wild, crazy thing to have done! What on earth had made her promise to meet an aviation mechanic in the garden of the Strangers' Club! She couldn't possibly do such a thing. She was going there to a dance with Alec Sander to-morrow night—with Alec, whom she loved and was going to marry.

How could she dream of meeting another man in the garden, particularly an enlisted man, a man on Alec's own ship?

And yet—she could still see the boy's eager, pleading eyes. "Would you consider—explorin' Colon with me?"

It was a call to adventure, to romance, to something that in all her gay, cultured, restricted life she had never had.

True, she had been all over the world. Her father had been a captain in the Navy. But Navy women never saw any romance in their enforced wanderings. They saw merely a station where it wasn't too hot, or where servants were cheap or where the social life wasn't too boring.

Romance! Her face burned anew. Was she hoping to find romance in torrid Colon in the company of an aviation mechanic?

SHE started when Alec's voice said at her elbow: "I hope you haven't been bored waiting for me, dear."

She raised her head and smiled with relief as she found herself looking into familiar brown eyes again.

"Bored? Not at all."

"Now, that's the wrong answer. You should say that of course you were bored, without me."

Terry laughed. "I wasn't bored. But I—I missed you, Alec."

"That's better." Sander grinned boyishly. "Ready for tea now?"

"Yes, iced tea in tall, frosted glasses."

"It's ready down below." Sander paused an instant. "Say, Terry, would you be very much disappointed if we didn't go to the dance at the club to-morrow night?"

Terry started. "Not go? Why, Alec?"

"Well, one of our pilots made a forced landing up in the hills beyond Panama City. I have to go up there with a mechanic and supervise the repairing of his plane. I'll be away four or five days."

Terry's heart was pounding wildly. "Four or five days? Where is the plane?"

"In a little town called Penonome. You never heard of it. It's probably just a hot hole in the ground."

"No. I never heard of it."

She was appalled at the heavy beating of her pulses. Nine o'clock in the garden of the Strangers' Club. She looked into Alec's adoring eyes and felt an odd chill come over her. And then she heard her own voice saying tenderly:

"Alec, I'll miss you. And you'll be miserable up there. Can't some one else go?"

AT nine o'clock the next morning Lieutenant Alec Sander, accompanied by a mechanic, hopped off for a little town in the interior called Penonome.

At nine o'clock that night Terry Colfax, not without many misgivings, stood in a darkened corner of the tropical garden of the Strangers' Club, waiting for an aviation mechanic whose name she did not even know.

Through the open windows of the

clubhouse the music of a languorous waltz was borne to her on the warm breeze. Above her head the palm trees swayed softly. The air was heavy with the fragrance of mimosa and the odor of damp green ferns.

Terry pressed into the shadow of a tall hibiscus and drew the folds of her scarlet shawl more closely around her bare shoulders. It was nine o'clock, and he wasn't there. Perhaps he wouldn't come. A wave of relief shot through her. But it was followed almost immediately by a pang of disappointment.

Then a low voice said:

"Dark-eyed lady, are you there?"

"Here," said Terry, and found that she was trembling.

A white-clad figure stood beside her. The white hat was swept away from the dark curls and in the dim light from scattered lamps Terry could see sober blue eyes on her face.

"I didn't think you'd come," said the boy.

"Why—why not?" asked Terry.

"Well, I saw you meet Lieutenant Sander on the landing deck after you were talking to me. I didn't know you were his girl. I didn't know—"

Long, slim fingers touched her left hand and raised it slightly. The solitaire on her third finger flashed blue-white.

"I didn't know," the grave young voice went on, "that you were engaged to him."

Terry's hand dropped to her side. "I am," she said. "And I shouldn't be here."

"No," said the boy quietly. "And I shouldn't be here either. I tried—I tried not to come."

"So did I," answered Terry.

There was a strained silence. Above their heads the palm fronds crashed together in a sudden gust of wind; then the sharp rasping died slowly away to a gentle murmur.

"A few hours, out of all the hours he'll have with you, won't really matter," said the boy.

"Won't they?" asked Terry.

After a second she said: "No, I guess they won't."

The boy smiled suddenly. "Then let's make the most of them!" he cried. "What do you want to do?"

As the girl hesitated, he went on jerkily: "Of course, I can't take you any of the places where you're used to going. The places where officers go, I mean. And I can't take you to other places, where enlisted men go."

"Why, we don't want to go to any of those places!" Terry exclaimed. "We're going exploring, you and I."

The boy's smile was rueful. "I reckon we can't do much explorin'—now."

"Well, we can pretend," said Terry. "Let's get a car—no, a *carromata*—and ride around Colon. You've not seen it. It is at its mysterious best at night. Then we'll ride out the Coco Solo Road a way and see the old French Canal by moonlight."

"That listens mighty grand," said the boy. "You wait here while I hail a *carromata*."

HE swung away from her and she watched his lithe figure go down the graveled driveway. Now was her one last chance to put an end to this mad adventure. A few quick steps and she would be inside the Strangers' Club. She would be back among people she knew, among people with whom she lived. Among them this soft-voiced, blue-eyed youth had no place.

She drew her shawl more tightly

around her shoulders, took a single step forward.

A shrill whistle came to her ears. It was the boy's signal to a *carromata* driver.

He would be back in a few moments — and would find her gone. She could see his eager eyes darken with disappointment, could see the wry twist of his firm young mouth. At the fleeting vision an unbearable pain shot through her.

She loosened her shawl and shrank back into the shelter of the hibiscus.

Then she felt his firm fingers under her elbow.

"He's waitin'," the boy said. "Do you really want to go?"

Terry raised her eyes and for the first time their glances met fully. The girl felt the hot color surge over her throat and face.

"Yes," she almost whispered. "I really want to go."

He helped her into the waiting *carromata* and she noted with surprise that the top was up.

The boy intercepted her questioning glance.

"I reckon you'd rather have it that way. I reckoned you might not like to be seen ridin' with me."

Terry was ashamed of her flash of relief. "Why shouldn't I be seen?" she demanded. He must not realize that she really longed for the concealment the rusty black top offered. "Tell the driver to put it down, please. You can't see a thing with the top up."

The boy leaned forward and gave the order. As the ancient canopy came creaking down he looked at her with worshiping eyes. "You surely are a thoroughbred," he said. "But, then, I knew you were."

The skinny horse's sharp hoofs clattered on the cobblestones as the carriage rolled slowly down Front Street.

"BEFORE we begin our adventure," Terry suggested, "don't you think we'd better know each other's names?"

"Mine is Jim Taylor," said the boy. "Nothing romantic about that. But yours—yours ought to be something exotic—something that means dusky beauty and moonlight and sweetness of woman."

The girl laughed softly. "My name is Theresa Colfax. And I'm afraid Theresa has a very prosaic meaning, corn carrier or something. But everyone calls me Terry."

"Terry is absolutely right," said Jim Taylor. "Terry has nothing in common with Theresa. Theresa is a flaxen-haired German girl with an armful of corn husks. But Terry—Terry is a laughing maid with smoky hair and stars in her eyes and dew on her lips."

"My goodness!" cried Terry. "Is that how they teach you to talk in Texas?"

Jim Taylor laughed. "I reckon that's how they talk in my part of Texas—in San Antonio, down by the Rio Grande."

"Down by the Rio Grande!" exclaimed Terry. "That sounds like giant cactus and sand and *caballeros* mounted on black stallions and *señoritas* with roses in their hair. And swirling, turbulent water, and tragedy. That's what 'Rio Grande' sounds like to me."

"It sounds like heaven to me," said Jim Taylor.

They rode slowly down the narrow street. Along the sidewalks brightly lighted Hindu silk shops displayed their wares. Brilliantly embroidered Span-

ish shawls vied with gorgeous Chinese Mandarin coats for the eye of the tourist. Strings of jade and of pale carved ivory were etched against black velvet pads. Bags of flashing rhinestones twinkled coldly from among tapestries stiff with silver and gold.

The *carromata* rolled into a side street, where the sidewalks were filled with white-clad sailors who strolled along three and four abreast and made the night echo with their laughter, and shouted songs or darted in and out of the *cantinas'* swinging doors. From within the *cantinas* came strident, metallic music as swarthy fingers plucked at steel strings.

They turned into Bolivar Street, and here the *cantinas* were interspersed with dimly lighted shops whose windows displayed bolts of gaudy organdies and ginghams and calicoes, and flashy shirts made in the States, and wide, sprawling-white canvas shoes. They passed the empty native market, whose stalls were strewn with discarded vegetables and where the air was heavy with the smell of tainted meat and stale fish.

Another turn down a dark and quiet side street and they were back on Front Street, which runs along the bay. Here, among the gaudy Hindu shops, Terry espied a little store not so brightly lighted as the rest.

"Tell the driver to stop," she requested Jim. "I want to show you some things from the San Blas Islands."

They went inside the grimy shop and a slovenly native woman came from its dark interior to show them blouses that the San Blas women make, with their colorful, primitive designs so painstakingly executed upon a Turkish-red background. They saw the fearsome serpent costumes the San Blas medicine men wear, and crudely painted pottery and huge gold earrings and strings of round, polished gold beads.

"I'd like to buy you something here," said Jim Taylor, hesitatingly. "Isn't there something that you would like?"

Terry glanced at his earnest face. Then she asked the woman:

"Have you any strings of wild boars' teeth, such as the girls and children wear?"

"*Si,*" answered the woman shortly, and produced a box of the jagged necklaces, in which polished teeth are strung with small, multi-colored Indian beads.

Terry smiled her tender smile. "I'd like one of these, Jim," she said.

The woman wrapped the necklace up in rough brown paper and the girl slipped it into her rhinestone bag.

"AND now?" asked Jim, when they were in the *carromata* again.

"It's getting late," said Terry. "Tell him to drive out to the old French Canal. Then you must take me home."

The *carromata* rattled through noisy Colon; bumped along the quiet streets of Cristobal, the American concession along the Panama Canal, where all the stores were dark and stalwart United States marines patrolled the streets.

Finally it was rolling along the paved highway that leads to Coco Solo, the submarine base.

The jungle was close on either side. The moon made a silver path of the macadam and there was no sound save the murmur of the wind through the palms.

Terry knew that Jim's eyes were on

her face and that the pulses in her throat were pounding. When she felt that she could refuse to face him no longer, the driver, with knowledge born of long service to the *locos Americanos,* stopped the *carromata* beside the placid, moon-drenched French Canal.

Along the water the heavy jungle foliage hung in luxuriant festoons and made eerie shadows in the gleaming surface below. Night birds cried stridently from hidden roosts in the trees. An alligator slid off the bank with a lazy splash.

Terry looked down at her hand, which was so close to Jim's, but did not quite touch it. The boy's hand lay quiet on his knee, but Terry knew that the long, slender fingers were aching to close over hers.

She wanted to raise her eyes to him, but she, who had never feared a man, was suddenly afraid. There was a wild, sweet danger in the straight-forward glance of his blue eyes, in the firm, youthful curve of his mouth. Danger to her peace of mind and her happiness—her happiness and Alec Sander's.

"Terry," said the slow, musical voice. "Aren't you ever goin' to look at me?"

And Terry, the self-assured, the arrogant, murmured brokenly: "I'm—I'm afraid to, Jim."

"Afraid—of me?"

"Afraid of what will happen if I look at you."

The hand on the white trouser leg trembled slightly.

"I reckon I have no right to ask it," said Jim slowly. "But do you think he'll miss just one kiss? He'll have all your kisses for the rest of his life—and I want one so."

"I don't think he'll mind a kiss like that," said Terry softly and raised her vivid, flushed face to his.

Jim Taylor's hand closed tightly over hers. His other arm slid gently around her shoulders. Then his firm boyish mouth was against Terry's and she closed her eyes in a sudden, unconquerable ecstacy. When she opened them again Jim had released her and was giving a sharp order to the driver. The *carromata* turned creakingly about and started back to Colon.

Terry leaned back against the lumpy seat. She could still feel the thrill of Jim's lips on hers. No other man's kiss had ever been like that, and she knew, with a quick, hard pang, that no other man's ever would be—quite.

Hot tears stung her eyelids. She must never see Jim again after tonight. She couldn't see Jim again. There was no use going on, when the only thing they could ever give each other was pain.

She was engaged to Alec Sander, she was going to marry him. Even if there were no Alec, marriage to Jim was out of the question. She knew herself well enough to realize that. She knew she could never find happiness in such a marriage, no matter how romantic it might sound. Terry Colfax, daughter of the late Captain Eric Colfax, born to all the traditions of the Navy, could not become the wife of an enlisted man. She must never see Jim again.

The *carromata* drew up before the hotel, where Terry and her mother, who were visiting Colon while the fleet was in Limon Bay, were staying. Terry opened her eyes as Jim's hand closed over hers.

"To-morrow night?" he asked huskily.

And—

"To-morrow night," said Terry.

"At the same place." The whispered words were a sob.

AT nine o'clock that same night Alec Sander was sitting in the cool, dim patio of a little hotel in Penonome. Facing him and swinging slowly in a low hammock was a golden-haired, blue-eyed girl whose tanned face was flushed and tender and whose lips, as she talked to him in an odd halting English, were tremulous with eager happiness.

Now was her last chance to put an end to this mad adventure

Sander had arrived at Penonome filled with impatience to finish the task assigned him and to get back to Colon and to Terry Colfax. He had expected to sleep in a hot, dirty room where vermin infested the bed and mosquitos made the humid night a thing of misery. He had thought to eat unpalatable food, the sight of which would turn his stomach.

Instead he had found a picturesque Panamanian village whose narrow streets were lined with adobe houses painted yellow and pink and blue. He had found the Hotel *Internacional,* run by a clean, wizened German named Hans Mueller. He had been shown to a bare, cool little room with a cement floor and an immaculate narrow bed with fresh white sheets.

He had eaten a dinner served at a long clean table and composed of dishes entirely palatable to the American tongue. And seated across the table from himself and his red-haired mechanic, Les White, had been Hans Mueller's German-born daughter, Hester.

Hester was small and fair and vibrant with youth and health. Her white skin had taken on a golden glow from exposure to the hot Panamanian sun. Her eyes were sapphire blue and

looked shyly from beneath long black lashes at the strange Americans. Her yellow hair tumbled softly about her heart-shaped face. She spoke English in a husky, halting voice that was rich with the music of liquid Spanish vowels.

Though seated across the table from her, at first Sander had not noticed her especially. He was not particularly interested in any other girl save Terry. He had merely noted, with a certain amount of amusement, that Les White was attempting to engage the girl in conversation and that Hester's replies were brief, almost monosyllabic, while her eyes remained downcast.

When the meal was over, however, she had looked directly at Sander and the young lieutenant had realized suddenly how wistful and appealing she was.

"You are officer, señor?" she had inquired hesitatingly.

"Yes, señorita. I am a lieutenant."

"A lieu—lieu—" She had given up the difficult word with a charming grimace. "But you fly, do you not?"

"Yes. I am in the aviation corps."

"Eet mus' be wonderful to fly, to see so much countree."

Sander smiled. "I guess I do see a great deal of country. I never thought much about it."

"But me, who am only here, think much about oder countree."

Sander showed his surprise. "Have you been here all your life?"

"From a leetle girl."

"But you've been to Panama City and Colon, surely."

"One time I go to Panama." She smiled disarmingly. "I am veree busy here."

"What on earth do you find to do?"

She shrugged with a typically Spanish gesture that contrasted oddly with her Anglo-Saxon features. "Oh, many things. I look out for my father's children. I teach the school. I visit the sick, in company with the priest. I do many things."

"Do many Americans come here?" Sander had asked.

The girl shook her head. "No, no, señor. The people of the hills, who travel from Santiago to Panama and back, they come here. But *Americanos uno, dos, tres*—" She counted, smiling on her small fingers—"not many, señor. I have nevair seen American man like you."

AT the naïve admiration in her eyes, Sander had felt the blood rush into his face. Without looking, he had been able to picture Les White's amused, if respectful, grin.

But under the girl's wide violet eyes he felt his composure returning. After all, she was not being coquettish. She had been telling the simple truth. She had seen few Americans, probably only hard-faced adventurers or work-driven engineers, whose manners and actions were as rough as the clothes they wore. A man of a more leisured class had been, up to now, beyond her ken.

"There are plenty of Americans like me." Sander had said smilingly. "Annapolis turns them out by the hundreds."

Incredulously, the girl shook her head. "I do not onnerstan', señor. But I do not believe many are like you."

She had risen from the table with the lithe grace of a child. "Shall we sit without?" She motioned toward the patio. "It is much more cool."

The lieutenant had followed her from the room. Outside, in the patio, a few scattered lights were burning dimly. The flagstones of the court were damp with heavy tropical dew.

The girl seated herself in a low-slung hammock and motioned Sander to a chair close beside her. Les White, the lieutenant noted, had not followed them, but had evidently gone to his room.

"May I smoke, señorita?" Sander inquired.

She made a quick little gesture of assent. "Of a surety, señor."

Sander puffed his cigarette meditatively. "It seems odd," he said slowly, "to find some one like you away off up here."

She nodded comprehendingly. "Me, I do not know why I am here. My mother, she die when I am so small." She indicated a short height from the floor. "Then, quickly, one day, my father, he leave Germany. We stay in Panama a leetle while. I do not remember that. Then we come up here. My father, he marry with woman here. Now they have four children. My father, he nevair leave. I do not ask him why."

Sander nodded slowly. What a tragedy! The father, that mild-mannered, sandy-haired little man, evidently a fugitive from Germany. This lovely white girl, compelled to spend her life among the people of the hills, with a native stepmother and a brood of half-caste brothers and sisters. Small wonder she was so pathetically eager for the companionship of a man from the outer world.

FOR a long time they sat and talked, and she told him of her secluded life.

Hans Mueller came into the patio, and after a short exchange of pleasantries frugally blew out all but one of the sputtering lights and retired to his cell-like room.

The moonlight filtered dimly through the tangle of trees and vines and palms. Hester's white dress gleamed against the dark shrubbery, and the soft scrape of her toe on the flagstones as she kept the hammock in gentle motion was the only sound save the low tones of their two voices.

Finally, with visible reluctance, the girl rose from the hammock.

"I must go, señor. It becomes so late and I have not many hours to sleep. For how long, señor, will you be in Penonome?"

Sander had risen too. "Three or four days," he said slowly. "Yes—that long, surely."

She was standing very close to him. She was so small, he thought, looking down at her. The bright waves of her hair barely reached to his chest. As though she felt his gaze, she raised her head slowly.

"I am 'appee, señor," she said in her husky, sweet voice. "I will see you mañana."

Involuntarily, it seemed, their hands swung together. Sander's fingers slowly closed over her warm, delicate ones. Her languorous violet eyes met his shyly. For a long moment they stood there, held by a spell neither could break. Then Sander, unable longer to deny the hot, wild pounding in his heart, crushed her in his arms and bent to her tremulous parted lips.

After a brief instant she pushed him gently away.

"I go now, señor," she faltered. "It is so late." She raised her limpid, trusting eyes to his. "Maybe you would like to know, señor—you have had what no man has evair had before."

Sander stifled a remorseful groan. "I am—glad you told me, Hester," he said gently. "I—I am greatly honored."

Sander tossed on his narrow cot for many long, hot hours that night. He cursed himself as a bounder and a cad. He resolved again and again to leave the Hotel *Internacional* in the morning, even if he had to sleep in the jungle beside the crippled plane for the duration of his stay in Penonome. And each time he made the resolution he saw Hester's upturned, wistful face, saw her shadowed pansy eyes, saw her lovely curved lips, and knew, even as he scorned himself for a weakling, that he would not go.

IN the garden of the Strangers' Club, partially concealed by the bright green and magenta of a trailing bougainvillea, there is a narrow stone bench. Few persons know of its presence, for Americans seldom stray far from the dance floor of the club, or from its adjacent balcony. But now and then lovers seeking solitude have exchanged their vows and kisses in this shadowy retreat.

Terry Colfax had discovered the bench the second night she met Jim Taylor in the garden. Now, for the third time, they had made it their rendezvous. They were sitting there in silence, hands tightly clasping hands, in a misery so acute that neither could find words to console the other.

Finally Terry said in a level tone:

"Alec will be back by noon to-morrow."

"I know," said Jim. "I reckon to-night is—good-by, isn't it, honey?"

"It has to be, Jim."

The boy's sensitive lips twitched. "From the very beginnin' we knew it couldn't last. I reckon we ought to be prepared, Terry."

"I don't believe any one is ever fully prepared for—pain, Jim."

His strong young arms crushed her.

"Oh, Terry, Terry! Isn't there any way out?"

The girl pushed her heavy dark hair away from her moist forehead.

"You answer that," she said wearily.

"I don't have to," he replied. "We know the answer. There's a part of both of us that was made for the other. An' there's another part that's as distant as the poles. Unfortunately, that side is the strongest side of both of us. So there's only one solution, Terry."

The girl nodded. "But I'll never forget, Jim."

"Neither will I. An' there will be nights, Terry, when I won't be able to sleep for seein' the shine in your eyes. There'll be days when I'd gladly die for the feel of your lips against mine."

"I know," said the girl. "But there will be other days and nights, Jim. And there will be another girl, too, a girl who will give you all that I have and all that I am too selfish to give." She looked squarely into his clean-cut face. "There will always be a girl for you, Jim."

He gave a bitter laugh. "I reckon so. An' I reckon the time will come when I can see the moonlight and not remember how it shimmers on your hair. But that doesn't help me now."

"Nothing helps now," said Terry. She stood up suddenly and her hands were icy cold in his grasp. "Let's—let's have it over with, Jim."

"Do you care so much?"

She nodded mutely.

"Would it be easier if I—asked for a transfer? I could easily get sent back to the States."

She shook her head. "That would be running away—for both of us. Stay down here, Jim. But I don't think—

when I see you again, I will even—speak to you."

"Neither of us are the kind who write postscripts, Terry."

Her fingers tightened on his.

"Well," she whispered, "good-by, Jim."

His lips burned against hers. The night swirled madly around her, and there was nothing in the world but the close, hard pressure of their mouths. Then he released her, and she stood swaying an instant, her face pressed into her cold hands.

When she raised her head she was alone in the garden.

IT was very quiet in the patio of the Hotel *Internacional*. Long ago the light that glimmered through the shutters of Hans Mueller's door had gone out. But to the girl and the man sitting in the motionless hammock time had seemed to stand still.

"So," Hester said slowly, "you go mañana, Al-lec?"

"To-morrow morning, yes."

"You will see the señorita to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"You will be 'appee, Al-lec?"

"I—"

"You *must* be 'appee. I wish for you to be."

Sander smiled wryly. "How about you, Hester?"

"Oh," she said with a slow shrug, "life for me will be as before. Life does not stop, Al-lec, because a man go away."

"But there is no one else for you, is there, Hester? No one who loves you?"

She shook her head. Her lashes veiled her eyes as she answered, not without a certain hauteur: "There are only natives in Penonome; but one day, of a surety, some one else will come."

"I hope so," said Sander. He passed his hand wearily across his eyes. "It's all such a tangle. I love Terry. I'm sure I love Terry. But you, Hester—I don't see how I can leave you, up here in the hills, alone."

"You forget, Al-lec. I love my hills before you come to them. I will love them again. I will love them more, for you have been in them."

Sander's voice was hoarse with emotion. "I'll always remember you, Hester. You will always be something infinitely sweet and precious in my memory." His face contorted suddenly. "Oh, Lord, why is life such a mess?"

Hester's fingers caressed his clenched hand. "Life, it ees not so bad, Al-lec. We have known each other for four beautiful days. We—what you say?—play fair. You tol' me of the señorita. I onnerstan'. I am content."

"If I could only be sure of that!"

The violet eyes met his steadily. He realized with a start that this was no tempestuous Spanish girl who sat beside him. This was a girl born of sturdy German stock, and Teutonic fortitude was her birthright.

"You may be veree sure that I am content, Al-lec," her low, husky voice assured him. "I will be sad, of a certainty. I will long for you. But by and by, life, it will be jus' the same."

Sander rose from the hammock. Gently he pulled her to her feet. With his arms around her, he said: "I'll be gone before you are up in the morning. Kiss me good-by, Hester."

Her lips trembled beneath his for a fleeting instant; then she pushed him away.

"I go now, Al-lec," she said. "You

would not be 'appee if you go firs'. You would not like to think of me standing in the patio alone."

Quickly as a hummingbird she was gone. Sander watched until he saw the light shining through the shutters of her room.

Slowly he made his way to his own quarters.

TERRY COLFAX and Lieutenant Sander were dancing at the Strangers' Club. The usual gay Saturday night crowd was there: well-groomed American women in softly colored, hand-painted or embroidered organdies; men in white linen suits or stiffly starched mess jackets. Jovial voices called greetings to Sander as he and Terry circled the dance floor.

The lieutenant returned the greetings laughingly. But always the laugh was gone when he turned back to Terry. And Terry, too, was unwontedly sober.

The girl had been overwhelmingly glad to see Alec that afternoon. His tall, straight figure in its immaculate white uniform had brought with it a feeling of familiarity which had somewhat assuaged the heavy pain in her heart. It had been good to be near him again, to hear the half-forgotten tenderness of his voice, to meet his steady brown eyes.

But soon after the first greetings were over, Terry had found herself making unintentional, unwelcome comparisons: the touch of his hand as it came in contact with hers, how like and yet how unlike that of other long, slender fingers; his smile, that had always seemed to her the essence of tenderness and adoration, yet how different from another boyish and worshipful smile.

As the day wore on she had become aware, too, of an unwonted strain in his manner toward her.

For one moment she wondered desperately if in some way he had found out. But she dismissed the idea immediately. She knew that if he had, he would ask her about it, point-blank. He would not resort to subterfuge to force a confession from her.

By the time they had come to the Strangers' Club for dinner Terry was utterly miserable. Alec, also, was not his usual self. She had caught, several times, a preoccupied expression on his face. He didn't always hear what she said to him; and because it was such an effort for her to make a pretense at her usual light-hearted conversation, she finally abandoned the attempt.

THEY had gone through dinner in a dispirited, heavy silence. Now and then, when their eyes met, they would smile, quickly, almost anxiously, and one or the other would make some inane comment. By the time the dancing began Terry was in a high state of nervousness.

What if she had made a mistake, after all? What if she really loved Jim Taylor? Surely if it were Alec she loved, she would not be so unhappy now that she was with him again.

She had tried to be so sagacious, so wise. She had honestly wanted to do the best thing for every one concerned. But she must have done wrong. Somewhere in the course she had so anxiously worked out there must have been a miscalculation.

At last she could endure the brightly lighted, noisy ballroom no longer. She turned to Alec tensely. "Take me out on the balcony for awhile, please. It's so terribly warm in here."

"Oh, I'm sorry, dear; I should have thought." Alec was all solicitude.

"Here, better put your shawl around your shoulders. There's a stiff breeze blowing to-night."

On the balcony, leaning against the parapet that overlooked the bay, Terry knew suddenly that she must tell Alec. In no other way was there peace for her. The telling would hurt him, she knew, but she would hurt him worse if she went on, feeling as she did. She drew away from his encircling arm and faced him desperately.

"Alec, I have to tell you something. I don't want to, but I know things will never be right between us until I do."

Sander's face was sober. "What is it, dear? You needn't be afraid to tell me anything, you know."

Terry caught her breath. "Well, it's this," she said. "While you were away I went out every night with another man—an enlisted man, Alec, a sailor. And I let him make love to me; I wanted him to make love to me. And when he left me last night I wanted to die."

Sander turned his head away. "Do you still feel that way, Terry?"

The girl sobbed suddenly. "I don't know, Alec. I think of him, and I look at you, and I love you both. Oh, Alec, what am I going to do?"

Sander put his arms gently around her.

"Do?" he asked. "Why, nothing, sweetheart. You don't love him, really. If you did, you wouldn't be here with me to-night.

"He must have been a pretty decent sort, or you wouldn't feel the way you do. There must have been something about him that struck a chord in you I've never touched. But it wasn't strong enough to hold you, and that's all I care about. I'm glad you told me, Terry."

"And it doesn't make any difference between us? You are still sure of my love?"

"I'm certain of it, dear." He kissed her tenderly.

Then he held her against him and looked out across the bay. Once more Terry saw that distant, preoccupied expression creep into his face.

"What is it, Alec?" she asked "Are you just pretending, to save my feelings?"

He shook his head. "No, I'm not pretending." He took her by the shoulders and held her away from him.

"THERE was a girl in Penonome," he said abruptly.

The color drained from Terry's face. "Yes?" she whispered.

"I—I can't explain her to you, Terry. But she swept me off my feet. Not consciously or designedly. I know that loving me hurt her terribly. I wanted to come back to you—and I couldn't bear to leave her. I've been in hell since last night."

"But you came back to me," said Terry. "Did you do it because you thought you had to?"

"No. Because I wanted you more than I wanted her."

"Is she—my sort of girl?"

"No. She lives up there in the hills with her German father and a native stepmother, and speaks nothing but Spanish and broken English. But she is sweet and pitiful and brave."

Terry swallowed. "How—how do you feel about her now?"

"Well, there's a part of me that loves her. But she's not you. There's only one of you in the world for me, Terry."

"Then, what's the matter with us?" Terry asked piteously. "We think we love one another, but yet we've each given part of our love to some one

else. We've each hurt some one else. And, it seems to me, we each did it with our eyes open."

"I don't know, Terry," Sander answered wearily. "If I did, I'd be able to explain one of the greatest enigmas of life. But I don't believe we did it intentionally. Some time every swimmer finds himself in a current that is too strong for him. I—I couldn't help myself."

"Neither could I," whispered Terry. "Oh, Alec, do other lovers have things happen to them like this?"

"I wouldn't be surprised, dear. Only most of them keep it to themselves. And I think perhaps their brooding silence is their greatest mistake."

"Then, you think we'll be happier because we've told each other?"

"I honestly think so, Terry."

Tears glistened in the girl's eyes.

"That's all that's necessary, isn't it, Alec?"

"I guess it is, dear."

"Well, then—kiss me the way you haven't kissed me since you came back from Penonome!"

"Do you really want me to, Terry?"

"I really do."

Sander took her in his arms. As hers slipped up around his neck, she laughed, a little tremulously.

Love Is—

LOVE is a subtle cup—
A sip of dew, at dawn,
For lad and lass
On Eden's lawn.

Love is a witch's kettle—
Where green flames of spring
Blow petal after petal
Till two hearts sing.

Love is a smoky dipper—
A gypsy-tin
With brew of dew, and starlight
And a prayer within!

—*Queene B. Lister.*

Winter in Her Heart

Amid the splendor of sun-touched snow and ice Carey found the sweetest experience of life and lost it. And it was winter in her heart . . .

By Ethel LeCompte

"WHEN Billy wrote 'Brighten the Corner Where You Are' he meant red-haired ladies. That Titian crown of yours, Cleo my child, not only brightens the corner where you hand out telephone numbers, but illuminates the whole lobby and cheers up all and sundry male guests besides being the one gay spot in my drab existence."

This absurd speech, spoken in a teasing, masculine voice, reached the ears of Carey Wyeth as she repeated over the telephone to the main office operator a long-winded, long-worded day letter: "—wire answer immediately end of message sig initials J for John, B for Boston, Kent, K for king, E for Edward, N for New York, T for Tom, period, repeat, please."

Although she listened intently to the repetition, she could not help but hear the voice continuing:

"Honest to Humbolt, Cleo, it's a much lovelier shade of red this morning! I've been ensnared in its bright meshes ever since I arrived, but it never took the hear-rt clean out o' me bosom before."

The speaker was evidently standing close to her desk, but still Carey did not look up. This was the first time Peggy had trusted her to "hold down" the combination telephone and telegraph office of the Saranac Hotel, and she found her work needed all her at-

tention. With a sigh of relief she gave her OK to the main office operator, and scribbled on the telegram the initials the operator gave her, together with her own and the time.

"Well, if you won't look up of your own free will—"

Carey felt a tug at one of her curls, and, for the first time, realized that it was to her the man had been talking.

A split second later an extremely dazed young man was ruefully rubbing a cheek which was beginning to redden, while Carey, her hand tingling, regarded him wrathfully.

"Why—you're *not* Cleo!" the young man muttered inanely.

He smiled a sickly smile, but no answering smile curved Carey's full red lips. "Well, that's sure one on me! But, lady, lady, what hair!" A sigh that seemed to come from the bottom of his heart accompanied the tribute. "How could I have mistaken your adorable Grecian head for—for another's? Pray recollect, though, that I did declare that it was the first time it had stirred this old rock-bound cardiac organ. Please smile, Beautiful."

With great difficulty Carey refrained from complying.

AGAIN the young man sighed. "Guess she just natchally can't smile. But, I'm making a small bet with Her Scornship. One of these fine winter days, says my ten-spot, those gorgeous green eyes will smile up into the melting brown orbs of hers truly, Twee Compton."

Carey, vastly busy with plugs and cams, found it increasingly difficult to keep from losing that bet.

Suddenly dropping his bantering manner, the young man said: "I most humbly beg your pardon. Please forgive me for—for everything, and be kind enough to give me Pennsylvania 6373."

Carey repeated the number into her transmitter and murmured: "Booth three, please," to Mr. Twee Compton.

Before she snapped down the cam she heard him ask about booking a stateroom on the *Ile de France* for January third sailing.

Carey glanced at the calendar and saw with a slight feeling of dismay that January third was only a week away. Realizing that she did feel dismayed brought her wandering thoughts up sharp. The scolding she proceeded to give herself was interrupted by the arrival of Peggy.

Peggy slipped under the counter with: "How did you make out?"

"All right, I think," Carey answered. "It was quite slow, though. Here are the cash and slips. Collect for Penn call, booth three. I'm running along. I don't want to be here when he comes out."

Peggy craned her neck until she could see into booth three.

"Don't tell me that you don't wanna stick around to swap bon mots with Twee Compton?" she marveled.

"I do not," Carey told her emphatically and heatedly.

Peggy shrugged. Patting her red curls complacently, she said: "Why, he's the sweetest thing, Miss Worth. And handsome. I like 'em tall and dark. He calls me 'Cleo' and—"

"Raves about your Titian crown," interjected Carey.

"You bet he does. Now, if only I could skate," Peggy sighed.

Carey started and her eyes widened. "Skate?" she repeated.

Peggy nodded. "Mr. Compton's a professional skater. He's up here practicing for big time bookings in this country and Europe, he told me. His

partner just got married, and he's looking for another. She must have red hair, and be able to skate like Mrs. Jack Frost, and—why, what's the matter, Miss Worth?"

"I—nothing. See you at six, Peggy."

About an hour later Carey, in her well-worn but unmistakably expensive skating outfit of green wool, was skimming over the ice alone.

Luncheon over, other people came onto the lake. Carey skated about slowly, her eyes searching for Twee Compton. As soon as she saw his tall figure she darted away. Snatching off her cap, she tucked it under her belt. Bright curls flying, cheeks crimson, eyes luminous, she met Twee Compton almost head on. Pretending not to see him, she flashed across the lake again.

Carey had been skating since she was a child, and was as good as most professionals, and better than some of them; but never in her life had she striven to do her best as she did now. At the far end of the lake, which was still deserted, she swooped, and with no apparent effort, but with breathless speed, defied the law of gravity.

Her love for the sport all but drove from her mind the reason she was "showing off."

Suddenly her outflung hands were caught in an iron grip and she found herself skimming over the ice with Twee Compton. There was not a word spoken as they found their stride. If Carey had been happy skating alone, she was in seventh heaven now, but this was because she had found at last the perfect partner, one who skated as well as she did, not because he was a personable young man. At this stage of her career, Carey was "off" young men.

She had but one idea: to prove to herself that she could earn her own living.

As the pair, perfectly matched in skating and in pulchritude, darted in and out of the other skaters, there was much craning of necks and comment. Somehow a space was cleared, and Carey found herself the observed of all observers. Except for a few terse words concerning their performance, neither Twee nor she spoke. Finally she told him she had had enough, and they sped back to the other end of the lake and into a tiny inlet.

THERE, out of sight of the other skaters, Twee swung her around until they were face to face. Carey's heart was beating to suffocation, and her brain was singing a wild, sweet song. Through the curtain of her lashes she looked up at Twee. He was a different man from the one who had chattered so gayly and glibly that morning. His face looked older, so grave it was. His eyes were alight with amazement and admiration.

"Marvelous!" he breathed. "Simply marvelous!"

Carey threw back her head proudly and gave him the full battery of her glowing eyes. "Do I qualify?" she demanded.

"Qualify?"

"I have red hair, and I can skate."

"You have the most beautiful hair I ever saw. In fact, you are the most beautiful girl I ever saw. As for skating—you outdo the Snow Queen herself. I suppose you dance equally well."

"Dance? Why, I'm a curly wolf at dancing," bragged Carey modestly. "Well, do I get the job?"

"Job?" he repeated with an air of surprise.

"Peggy said that you wanted a skating partner," Carey explained.

"Oh, I was just spoofing Peggy," chuckled Twee.

Carey's heart sank. "Then," she whispered piteously, "you don't want a skating partner?"

Twee looked down at her speculatively. Then, hastily: "Why, of course I want one. I meant that I was kidding Peggy that she'd do."

Carey's spirits rose again. "If I practiced and worked hard, do you think I could become a professional?"

"I do not!"

Carey's face flamed. "Why **not?**" she demanded.

"Dear child, you cannot—smile."

"Why, how foolish. Of course I can."

"Let me see you." Twee grinned down at her engagingly.

Carey's lips parted, curved into a ravishing smile.

"You — can — smile," Twee said slowly. "The job is yours."

"Oh, thank you; thank you, Mr. Compton," cried Carey.

"You're entirely welcome. Now pay me ten dollars. I think that was the sum we bet that you'd smile at me."

"We bet? You mean you bet. However, you may take it out of my first week's pay."

"First week's? How much salary do you think you'll get, young woman? First month's is more like it. Tell you what, though—I'll race you to the clubhouse for the ten. Give you a handicap, too. That tree"—he pointed—"do?"

With a nod Carey sped away. At the tree she waited until she heard Twee's shout: "Go!"

She won, but it took all she had.

"How about a spot o' tea, as we say in London?" asked Twee.

"I—I hardly think so; but thank you, Mr. Compton."

"Why not, Miss Worth?"

At her raised eyebrows he explained: "Miss Peggy Trent told me your name. But why won't you have tea with me?"

"Y' see, I'm working here, and I think the management would not consider it the thing to do."

"Sit here while I unlace your boots," said Twee. As he knelt before her he looked up and said softly and suddenly: "Why are you masquerading, Miss Worth?"

"Masquerading? But—I assure you I am not, Mr. Compton!"

"Well, put it this way: why are you working here?"

"To earn money, of course."

"But you're not—"

Carey glanced about her nervously. "Tell you some other time," she told him in a low tone.

"At the dance to-night?"

"Oh, we employees do not go to the dances."

Twee gestured impatiently. "This is a masquerade. No one will know."

Carey, wanting to go, to dance once more in this place where she had had so many happy times in her past, considered. "I'll do it," she told him.

"Good girl! What 'll you wear?"

"I've an Indian Princess costume I wore last year at—" Carey checked herself before she said "St. Moritz" and substituted "a dance. And you?"

"Oh, I have a gay and giddy cavalier outfit. Watch for my pure white plume, Snow Queen."

IT was eleven o'clock when Carey, no longer a red-haired white girl, but a dusky Indian maiden, with sleek, bead-trimmed wig and a costume of soft white doeskin, short, and

fringed, and with moccasins to match, peered through the slits in her mask at the dancers.

Once again, after two years of leading the simple life of a working girl, Carey was one with the gay throng. Once more she could answer the luring appeal of the seductive music that cried: "Come, dance—dance, little lady, dance!"

Before she could find Twee, Carey encountered several partners.

Then a Cossack claimed her.

"As one savage to another," began the Cossack abruptly, "how's the scalping business?"

Carey's red mouth below her mask curved in a saucy grin.

"The scalping business is terrible," she told him. "My first partner was a monk, who taught me that it was wrong to scalp people. I was telling that rabbit over there that I had ideas about him in connection with my stew pot, so he threw me into the clutches of a bear. I did use my knife on the bear, but he escaped. Have you, by any chance, a nice scalp under that astrakan shako?"

"Have I? Oh, lady, how your little hands would love to ruffle my nice brown curls! But the brain under the curls is in such a whirl, and the heart under this Russe edition of a Sam Brown belt is beating so wildly that—"

"TELL that to your horse, Cossack," suggested a voice behind Carey. "Princess White Deer is interested in no other heart than mine."

"Ah, Sir Walter Raleigh himself!" ejaculated the Cossack. "You always were strong for the dusky belles of Virginia."

He bowed over her hand and was gone.

"Having a good time, princess?" asked Sir Walter.

"Gorgeous!"

"So gorgeous that you forgot all about me. Forgot to watch for my snowy plume, eh?"

"So, it's you, Jack Frost?" laughed Carey, and went on to tell him of her various partners. "But why didn't you look for me sooner?"

"I had to answer some telegrams, and just got here."

"Anything about bookings for our act?" asked Carey eagerly.

"How'd you guess, squawette?" he teased. "Honest to Humbolt, Beautiful, you dance like Dame Terpsichore's favorite niece."

"And you like her nephew, which makes us sister 'n' brother."

Twee laughed. "Thanks for the boost, but the idea is not so hot."

For some time they danced in silence, Carey thrilling to the perfection of her partner's steps.

"Confound it," he ejaculated suddenly, "here comes that darn Cossack to cut in. He'll try to keep you until intermission."

"Let's fool him and sneak out through this door," suggested Carey.

"Atta princess!" applauded Twee. Then, ruefully, "But I've got to be fair, Carey—you're missing a swell chance to cop off real dough. The bold Ivan is none other than Peters, the son of the grocery Houdini."

"Grocery Houdini?" They were through the door and scurrying across the restaurant to a corner table.

After they were seated, Twee explained: "I mean Mr. A. & P., child. Houdini did tricks with chains. Mr. A. & P. did 'em with chain stores!"

"Well, if my brother and sister idea was cold, your pun, joke, or what have you, is frigid, Sir Walter."

Twee shrugged resignedly. "But Peters isn't. How'd you like to be Mrs. A. & P., Jr.? Better'n being half of a skating vaudeville team, don't you think, princess?"

"Infinitely. But, strange as it may seem, I prefer to be the latter." The sincerity in Carey's voice made Twee eye her thoughtfully.

"Soon as we tell this hovering pest what we'll have to eat, I'll expect you to give chapter and verse to that statement."

Over their sandwiches and coffee Carey gave them to him.

"My name," she began, "is Carey Wyeth. Yes; I see you know now. Daughter of Charles Wyeth. You—you read of his—death?"

Twee nodded. "I've often wondered why—he did it."

Carey leaned close to him. "No one ever knew but Dr. Weeks and I. He was going blind. Death was preferable to a man who worshiped beauty as he did. He simply could not go on living after he could no longer mold clay, carve marble into—well, you know the glorious things my father created. Unhappily I inherited none of his talent; but it was he who taught me to dance, to skate, to keep my body in condition. We used to come up here, season after season, and—" She choked and gestured helplessly.

"Poor little princess," comforted Twee, smiling tenderly.

THEN, after a silence: "But why did you take this telephone job? Surely there are other things you can do if you must work."

Carey raised her mask to dab her eyes. "There are just two things I can do: skate and dance," she told him. "The telephone job is a means to an end. There are so many dancers that I decided to try the other. Dad left me practically penniless, for he was a sad spendthrift, bless his heart, so I had to earn while I learned, as they say in the ads. I went to the telephone school, and then, through the manager here, was transferred. My idea was to practice skating — I never thought that I'd meet some one who could help me on the very first day."

While she had been speaking, Twee had listened in obvious admiration. "Gosh! You have got brains! Who else would have thought of working out a way to capitalize talent like that?"

Carey smiled wistfully.

"Then you don't think it a mad idea?"

"On the contrary."

"And you will let me have the opportunity to learn to be a professional?"

Twee frowned and did not answer immediately.

Carey felt as if some one had dashed cold water over her. She raised her cup to her lips, but her hand trembled so that she had to put it back on the saucer again.

"Just now," began Twee, with an obvious effort, "I applauded your scheme; said I didn't consider it a mad idea. Let me amend that. As a last resort, it is a dandy scheme. No—hear me out, please," he said as Carey tried to interrupt. "Why didn't you come up here to capitalize your beauty, your charm? Knowing the place, you also know its habitués. The plums of the matrimonial market flock here, my child. That monk you told me of was Phelps, the banker. Then there is Peters, young, handsome and owsley, simply owsley with coin."

"Not being exactly a fool, nor burdened with over much modesty, natu-

rally I thought of the matrimonial possibilities," retorted Carey.

EVIDENTLY taken aback, Twee stared and questioned: "And—passed up the idea in favor of the other?"

"After having been the constant companion of a man such as my father; knowing, through his teaching, that life can be a thing of beauty; skimming the cream off existence as we did, I can't imagine myself tied to a middle-aged, complacent banker, nor to a spoiled youth of the *jeunesse dore* type. You are different. I mean," she added hastily, "it would be as thrilling to bat around with you as it was with my father."

Twee gravely arose, gravely bowed and gravely sat down. "First there's the grand little idea of brother and sister, now I'm daddy."

"Oh, Twee," cut in Carey, "you know I didn't mean that. I meant that people who are professionals, artists, have the fire that makes for capacity to get the meat out of the nut of life."

"Then, if I were the son of a multi-millionaire, or a boy wizard of Wall Street, you would have nothing to do with me with or without 'object matrimony'?"

"I'd leave you as flat as I left the gallant Cossack."

"But you're willing—lemme get this straight. You're willing to work like an old Uncle Tom with me swinging a Legree whip just because I'm a professional skater and dancer?"

"That's it exactly. Add to that I want to earn some money my own self. Are we partners?"

"I'll say we are!"

Twee laid his strong brown hand, palm up, on the table; Carey laid hers upon it. The grip he gave her confirmed her estimate of his ability to live life as it should be lived.

"On the ice at nine to-morrow for yours, Princess Deerskin. You'll put in about ten hours a day with little Twee from now on."

"But I cannot," dismayed Carey. "I have to work from noon until six to-morrow. It's my short day. Next day from eight—"

"If," interposed Twee, "you are to work with me, you'll have to cut out the telephone racket. There's to be the usual New Year Carnival here, and you and I have to get an act ready for it."

"But I have to have shelter and food meanwhile."

"Oh, that's it! I thought you understood I paid you while we worked up the act," Twee told her with a businesslike air. "Fifty dollars a week, but you mustn't tell as we must appear to be amateurs, y' know, while we're here. Tell Peggy not to spill the beans either."

"Isn't that a lot, fifty a week?" queried Carey.

"Pretty good salary," Twee admitted, "but nothing to what we'll drag down when we get on big time, Beautiful. Now, if you've finished playing with that sandwich we'll go show that Cossack and the rest of 'em some fancy hoofing, eh?"

"But they're unmasking," demurred Carey at the door.

"No one would know you in that black wig; besides, if you've worked only one day they wouldn't remember."

"I worked a few days with Peggy showing me, but—" she slipped off the mask.

"Speaking of Peggy," said Twee. "She's over there"—indicating a little pierrette. "See if she knows you."

Peggy didn't, but squealed delightedly when she was enlightened. "I took a chance," she giggled, "thought about asking you, but didn't know whether you would have a costume. My, it's a snappy one."

"Peggy, I've the most wonderful news! Mr. Compton is taking me on as his skating partner!"

"Oh, Miss Worth, I'm so glad for your sake. I didn't know you could skate so well."

"She skates like the Snow Queen, Peggy," declared Twee, whirling her away as the Cossack claimed Carey.

TIRED out, Carey slept until Peggy awakened her just before eight o'clock.

"Mr. Compton told me," began Peggy breathlessly, "that you'd have to quit the phone job if you took up with him."

"But I'll stay until you can get a girl up from New York."

"You don't have to if you'd rather not. I'll tell Mr. Fields this morning, or you tell him, and I'll ask for my sister. She's right down here in the village and is anxious to work here."

"Everything's fitting together like a jig saw puzzle," cried Carey. "If you don't mind I'll tell Mr. Fields myself, Peggy."

At ten Carey found herself released from her telephone obligation and installed in a room on the guest floor, the accepted partner of Twee Compton. After luncheon she went out to the lake to be hailed delightedly by Twee. Over in the inlet they tried some new stuff for a while. Then Carey darted away to "show off."

As she skated back she saw that Peters had joined Twee.

"That ought to knock 'em into the aisles, eh, partner?" she called.

"If it doesn't loosen your brains before then," growled Twee. "Gosh, Carey," he added, "please don't be as ambitious as that quite so early in the game."

"I have to learn, don't I?" Carey smiled at him and turned to Peters. "Mr. Compton and I are going to knock 'em dead in big time."

"You mean at the carnival here?"

"And at the vaudeville houses. He's taken me on as his skating and dancing partner. We've had telegrams about bookings already and—"

"Carey," cut in Twee, "don't you remember I told you we must keep our agreement *sub rosa* here?"

"Oh, Twee, forgive me. I quite forgot. But I'm sure Mr. Peters won't broadcast it." Her eyes turned appealingly to Peters, who bowed as low as his skates would allow. "Of course I shan't," he assured her, "but from now on, you must not high hat me or I might blackmail you."

His words were light enough, his tone teasing, but there was a subtle threat underneath them.

Then, too, there was something between him and Twee that baffled her. Too indefinite, too nebulous to lay a finger on and examine, but — it was there.

With a gay farewell and a mocking laugh, Peters skated away.

"Now we've got him on our hands," groaned Twee.

"Oh, I am sorry," regretted Carey. "But I was so excited and—"

"Not blaming you a bit," interposed Twee.

WHEN Carey climbed into bed that night she told herself that she was going to stay there for a whole night and a whole day and another whole night.

The next morning it was snowing heavily. There would be no skating, and Twee had the brilliant idea that they ski up to Mount Kit and have midday dinner at Kit Club there. Try to keep Carey abed with a project as thrilling as that!

She dragged out her skiing costume that had been daring at St. Moritz three years ago, and was still smart enough to win the approval of masculine and the envy of feminine eyes. It was of cloth and fur, both the shade of green that did nice things to the wearer's complexion, and it fitted as if she had been poured into it.

"Whither away?" sang out Peters as Carey waited for Twee to get her a pair of skis.

"Wither away yourself," retorted Twee as he came up.

Peters flushed angrily. "Don't get too gay, Compton," he snapped.

"Now don't be sil," cried Carey. "We're for skiing up Mount Kit."

"Just you two in this snow? It's twenty miles."

"Why not?" demanded Twee. "We're both old hands at it."

Peters shrugged and drifted away, shaking his head.

She knew now that it was love, not hate

It was one o'clock when they reached the club, tired and, despite the zero weather, hot. After a rest and dinner, they danced to the music of the radio. It was nearly three when they started back. Miles of steady plowing through soft snow and they decided to go back to the club for the night.

"Tired?" Twee asked when they finally reached their objective.

"Dead," Carey admitted. "I'm going right to bed."

"Get up for supper later?"

"If I wake up."

It was eight the next morning when Carey did awaken. The trip back was easy and delightful, for the snow had hardened. As they reached the hotel,

Peters greeted them with a meaningful smile and a loud, "I was about to organize a searching party, Miss Worth."

"How thoughtful of you," murmured Carey with a bleak smile.

"Trying to be funny, Peters?" growled Twee.

Those within earshot turned; some grinned, others glared.

After that Carey had the feeling that she was being watched and talked about. Nevertheless she lost none of her enthusiasm for her new profession. Mornings she and Twee worked hard and perfected their stunts. Afternoons they went skiing, skijoring—horses pulling them across the frozen lake. Evenings they danced or went to the talkies or sat in the lounge reading.

Peters managed once in a while to get Carey to himself. Banker Phelps also seemed to like her society, and his young sister sometimes made a fourth, pairing with Twee when they went up to "The Camp" for hot wheat cakes and coffee after skating or skiing.

NEW YEAR'S eve found the hotel packed. Carey and Twee were headliners at the Ice Carnival. They were billed "The Snow Queen and Jack Frost," and were costumed accordingly. Carey, in white velvet and fur, tightfitting bodice, short flaring skirt, high, white kid boots. Twee in skin-tight white cloth covered with glittering particles.

Varicolored lights were strung over the lake; fireworks made the scene ever brighter. The band blared forth "The Stars and Stripes Forever," and, like a handful of confetti thrown onto a frosted mirror, the dancers in their gayly colored costumes run onto the ice and began the march. At the conclusion they spread out until there was a single row of spectators circling the lower part of the lake.

There were races, straight and obstacle, lacrosse and a burlesque game of hockey, followed by a "bull fight."

Then it was time for "The Snow Queen and Jack Frost!"

Stage fright seized and held Carey.

"I—oh, Twee, I can't go through with it," she whimpered as the long-drawn *rat-a-bleu* of the drums challenged the attention of the spectators.

"The devil you can't!" exploded Twee, grasping her white velvet clad shoulders and shaking her. "If you quit on me now, young woman, the jolt you gave yourself the first time you tried to summerset won't be one, two, three to what I'll give you with my own fair hands, and I don't mean maybe!"

He thrust his furious face close to hers and gritted his teeth.

Carey gasped and recoiled from this new Twee. Hatred for him surged through her body and convulsed it. Twee's hands dropped from her shoulders only to catch her arm. Even through the thick velvet she felt the bite of his fingers and tried to tear them away with both hands. There in the cold darkness, just a few feet from the waiting circle of light and the waiting circle of people, they stood embattled.

"You little red-headed quitter," flayed Twee.

As on the day Twee came into her life, again she saw red. Out shot her hand, but this time Twee was prepared. He caught the hand and pressed his lips to it. Before she knew it—torn as she was between anger and a new and inexplicable emotion—she found herself out on the cleared, lighted ice!

At their appearance a gasp of admiration went up, followed by silence.

Carey warmed to her work; her fright and rage melted away, leaving only exultation. She, Carey Wyeth, held this vast audience enthralled. Intoxicated by the knowledge, she outdid herself. Great as was her exultation, there was room in her being for another emotion, one that had had its inception with the touch of Twee's lips on her palm, one that was growing—growing—

THE last swirl, the last swing, the last turn in the air. As they darted away to the finish, thunderous applause followed them. In the shelter of the darkness, which had been the scene of Carey's anger but a short half hour ago, Twee took her in his arms and she knew that it was love for him, not hate, that would fill her heart as long as life should last.

"My wonderful darling," he breathed, his lips on her cheek. "My little Snow Queen! My heart's queen! I love you so that some day you'll just have to love me."

Carey, her slim body arched back in his embrace, answered softly and clearly. "I love you now, beloved. I think I have loved you forever, but I just found it out to-night."

There in the zero darkness the pyre of love flamed in two hearts as lip burned against lip, young blood ran hot to young blood.

They had but a few moments of privacy, however. Suddenly it seemed as if the audience *en masse* descended upon them. Several flash light photos of them were taken. In the mêlée that followed they were separated. Carey found herself dancing with one man after another until she was ready to drop from exhaustion.

When Peters fought his way to her and claimed her, she begged him to take her away from it all. Without a word he swung her up on his shoulder and made his way through the crowd to the bank.

By chance he found an opening in the snow wall, and beyond that a secluded bench. With a sigh of weariness Carey relaxed as he tenderly sat her down.

"It's been too much for you," he expostulated, seating himself beside her and slipping his arm about her. "They'll find us in a minute, I suppose, so I've got to take my chance while I may. Carey, I adore you, want to marry you and keep you safe always. Say you—"

Carey sat up abruptly. "Oh, Mr. Peters," she agonized, "I'm sorry, but you must not talk like that. It is Twee I love, and he loves me."

"He can't love you as I do, darling. I've seen you together, and feel sure."

"Only to-night we—we discovered it," Carey confessed.

"You've promised to marry him, then?"

"Why—why, there was no time for promises. Y' see—"

Peters cut in: "Then Twee didn't ask you to marry him?"

"But he meant that, of course. He kissed me and—"

Again Peters interrupted: "Which proves that my love is the greater. I asked you to marry me, to let me spend my life taking care of you before I ventured to kiss you. Oh, Carey, don't you see?"

Carey thrust away his seeking hands. "No, no!" she cried.

"Twee thinks only of himself. He took you up to Kit Club and kept you there all night, knowing that by so doing you would be the object of gossip. No, you listen to me before you run away. I've not wanted to tell you, but

just in order to have you with him, to amuse him, he made up that tale about his being a professional skater, pretended to train you, promised you vaudeville appearances, while the rumor grows that he's paying your hotel bill here. Why, Twee Compton is a broker on the curb! Last month he cleaned up a cool half million and came up here to get away from a girl in the Follies whom he's chucked, the bounder! And—"

BUT Carey was up and away.

After having lived through seconds of frozen, immobile torture, she had found strength to move. As she stumbled on in the darkness, hampered by her skates, all that Peters in his rage had told her kept boring into her brain.

Somehow she gained the side entrance, and through it the corner of the lobby where the telephone office was situated.

Peggy, still wearing her carnival costume, had just come in to finish her work. At the sight of Carey the night letter she was checking fluttered from her fingers.

Quick as a flash she had Carey in a chair and was kneeling before her, chafing her hands and begging to be told what had happened.

"My boots," gasped Carey. "Take my boots off. I must get away, Peggy, get away quickly."

"Yes, dear, yes," soothed Peggy; "you're simply all in. But suff'rin' snow 'n' ice, you were wonderful." She beckoned to a passing bell boy, and together they got Carey up to her room and her high boots unlaced.

Carey, her brain numbed with the repetition of the devastating words that Peters had spoken, lay inert on the bed while Peggy and the chambermaid ministered to her, the bell boy waiting near the door, ready to go for a doctor if necessary.

Suddenly Carey sat up. "Can I make the night express?" she called to the bell boy.

The boy glanced at his watch and said that she could, easily.

"Get me a ticket and a compartment on it," she ordered. "And a taxi to take me to the station. No—let him go," she cried when Peggy tried to countermand her orders.

"Help me pack, please, Tina," Carey said to the maid.

"Miss Worth—Carey," burst out Peggy, "whatever has happened?"

"Did Twee ever send or receive any messages about vaudeville bookings?" demanded Carey.

"No; but he did book passage on the French ship for the third. But, Carey, what is it all about? Tell me what happened."

"I can't! But I will tell you this: I never want to see this place nor skating costumes"—she was tearing off her Snow Queen suit—"nor Twee Compton again as long as I live."

"Oh, it's Twee!" breathed Peggy. Then, stoutly: "Carey, Twee is a dear. If he's been rude or mean, don't pay attention, he—"

"So you're another who thinks he's a dear!" flashed Carey. "But of course you are! Didn't he call you Cleo and—oh, Peters told me the truth about your precious Twee. There's a Follies' girl and—"

"Carey, you're mad — mad!" cried Peggy as she ran from the room.

Carey used every ounce of strength, every atom of will power to get herself away and onto the night express. She dropped like a dead thing on the berth in her compartment and lay there unconscious as the train started, gathered

speed and hurtled on through the black night.

FROM a distance a voice was calling her. A voice she loved and wanted to answer but could not. Hands beat at her and tried to drag her back from her peaceful quiet. Drops fell upon her cheeks and she couldn't even open her eyes to see what they were.

Suddenly she recognized that calling, insistent voice, and her eyelids fluttered, opened.

Twee's face was close to hers. His tears were wet upon her cheeks.

She lay still, thinking back, trying to remember what could have happened to make the ever-merry Twee cry, but it evaded her. With an effort she raised her arm and let it fall back of Twee's neck, so that it pressed Twee's face closer to hers.

"Don't — cry — lover," she murmured.

"Carey," he whispered. "Little sweetheart—"

Happily she sank back into oblivion.

Hours later she awakened, wondering at the dreams that had haunted her sleep, only to find that the most vivid of them was not a dream. Twee was there with her!

It took time and effort to tell Twee why she had run away from him; it took time and effort for him to confess that part of Peters's story was true. He, Twee, was a broker, and wealthy; he had spun the tale of the big time to win Carey's interest after she had been so emphatic about her ideas of life. The Follies' girl was Peters's invention, pure and simple.

"How did you find me?" Carey asked.

"Peggy, looking like a wild thing, got hold of me and told me as much as she knew, bless her heart. We must wire her as soon as we get to New York and tell her we're to be married as soon as the law allows, and are sailing on the *Ile de France*—that snap they took to-night 'll do for the passport—to put on one more good show at St. Moritz before we settled down as Twee Compton and manager. Correct in all details, Snow Queen?"

"All except the settling down."

"'Twould be pretty nice to settle down with me," coaxed Twee.

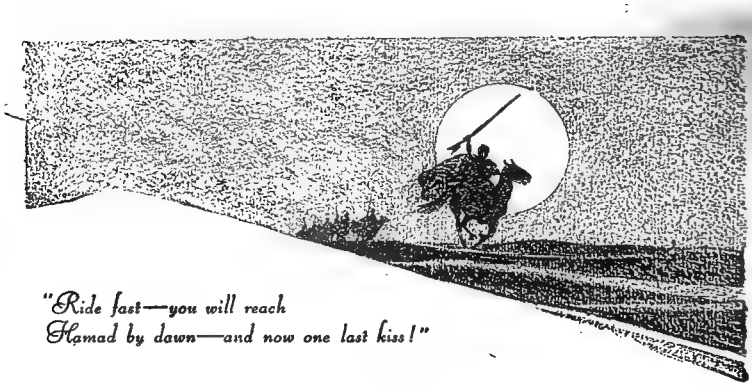
"I'm sure it would if we could be Snow Queen and Jack Frost for a few weeks each year."

"You bet we can! And there won't be any Cossacks allowed, for I'm going to hit the original one so hard that it 'll wipe out the breed."

"You're going to do no such thing," Carey told him. "I'll keep you too busy loving me even to think of him."

"Begin right now, Beautiful."

And Carey did.



"Ride fast—you will reach
Hamad by dawn—and now one last kiss!"

Moon of Araby

Burning sands: the strange far call of desert love whose exotic fascination held her senses thrall and denied the memory of a straight, tall American boy . . .

By C. S. Montanye

THE swanky, low-hung car dashed around the corner of the Rue Victor Hugo and drew up in front of the palatial Hotel Lafayette.

Blossom Wynn, her creamy chamois coat rakishly open, sprang out. She looked at Pierce Randall, her big blue eyes dancing. Together they went into the hotel. The fashionable Paris tea hour was at hand, and Blossom led the tall American to a table in the Peacock Room.

"Tell me all over again, Pierce," she asked of him softly.

Pierce Randall turned his gaze fully upon her exquisite beauty. He had known Blossom Wynn nearly all his life. In America, in New York, they had grown up together.

But it had taken their youth and a springtime in Paris to make Randall understand how deeply in love he was with Blossom.

"I love you!" he whispered, for her ears alone. "I love you better than anything in the world. Blossom, how nearly I came to making a terrible mistake!"

Blossom's blue eyes turned across the room to where, in a corner, Hilda

Clavell had just seated herself. The other girl was an exotic brunette, whose eyes held the mystery of midnight. Her hair was sable dark, but her lips burned like red roses.

"You mean," Blossom said thoughtfully, "thinking you were in love with Hilda?"

"Just that," Pierce Randall agreed, after a waiter placed tea paraphernalia before them. "My heart checked me in time. Blossom—I might have asked Hilda to marry me!"

"Whereas," Blossom murmured, "you've asked me, and to-morrow, when dad comes back from St. Cloud, we're going to break the news. Won't mother be surprised when we cable her? Everybody will be surprised!"

"Are you, too, sweetheart?"

Blossom considered him with parted lips.

Randall was sure she had never been so lovely. Her chamois motoring coat was flung back over her chair. Her pale golden head, with its tiny curls, glimmered in the sunshine that came in through the long windows. Blossom's skin was ivory white, her nose fascinatingly tiptilted, and if her mouth was not as red as Hilda's, it was equally as tempting.

Randall knew the dull, quick pound of his heart. How surely Blossom had the world at her tiny feet! She was the only daughter of Mortimer Wynn, the Texas oil magnate, and as such had the vast wealth of her father at her command. Mortimer Wynn denied Blossom nothing, and accordingly the girl, reared in luxury, had been somewhat spoiled and pampered. Randall, meditatively, wondered if marriage would satisfy her—if they would be completely and ecstatically happy together.

"Of course I'm surprised," Blossom purred, like a contented kitten in a pink basket. "It's wonderful to be in love. I never knew how exciting it was. And when I think of our wedding—back home in that old church on Fifth Avenue, with all our friends there—well, I get the grandest kick."

Pierce Randall masked his expressions well. That was Blossom's weakness—getting a kick out of things and failing to realize how serious life was unawakened. What she needed, Pierce told himself, was to be brought face to face with that other side of life she had never confronted. Perhaps, then, she would come to him with a better understanding of his love, and of what marriage might mean.

ACROSS the room Hilda Clavell was impatiently looking at the jeweled octagon ticking on her left wrist. She, like Pierce Randall, hid her feelings behind an imperturbable mask. There was hate in the surreptitious glances she directed toward that other table.

For months Hilda had been as much in love with Pierce Randall as her shallow, selfish nature permitted.

Secretly her feminine intuition told her that Pierce had been on the verge of proposing to her. Artfully, with infinite patience, she had led him along the glamorous road of infatuation until the previous night had dashed her fondest hopes into dust.

Last night Pierce Randall had told Hilda he was in love with Blossom Wynn.

No wonder hate and jealousy was like a knife goading her. Yet, Hilda found some small comfort in the knowledge that she was not entirely beaten. There was many a slip, she reflected, between the first kiss and the altar. And, if the man she expected could be used to fit her purpose, she might still pluck victory from defeat!

Blossom nibbled the little French cakes and sipped tea gayly. It was wonderful to think that she loved the tall man opposite. Dear Pierce! They would be gloriously happy together. He was going to allow her to have her own way just as her doting mother and father had always done. And what an ecstatic time they would have getting their home ready and preparing for the wedding day.

Quite suddenly, Blossom's complacent thoughts ended. She felt the magnetic tug of watching eyes. When she looked up she found a man had entered the Peacock Room and was slowly traversing its center aisle.

THE newcomer was sword slender and dark. His black, blazing gaze was fixed steadfastly upon her. Blossom knew instantly that this man was no Parisian, American, or the representative of any Continental country. He wore perfectly fitting, conventional afternoon attire, but there was a proud, imperious grace to him, a regal bearing that set him apart from all others.

He passed, and a minute later Blossom saw him bowing low before Hilda Clavell.

"Pierce," Blossom said tensely, "that man—over there with Hilda—do you know who he is?"

Randall, engrossed with a cigarette, moved his head to look.

"Yes, he is Dhan Hassan, an Arabian sheik—the kind you read about. His ancestors were cultured French people adopted into the tribe—romantic, isn't it? Hilda met him through some friends at Montmartre the other night. I understand he is here in Paris

for another week. Then he returns to El Cintra, his desert home. Why?"

Blossom stirred, moving her sweetly sloping shoulders idly.

"I was only wondering. He looks so strange, so foreign." Impulsively she pushed her fragile teacup aside and jumped up. "Come on, let's get out of here. Let's go down to that shop on the Boulevard des Capucines and see about our costumes for the masked ball at Vionnet's."

Pierce Randall mashed out his cigarette and stood.

"Coming," he murmured.

Blossom swept out of the Peacock Room, followed, as usual, by admiring glances. At the table in the corner, Hilda Clavell looked up at the handsome Dhan Hassan.

"I promised to point her out to you and I have. What do you think?" Hilda asked him eagerly.

The Arabian blew cigarette smoke through his sensitive, finely modelled nostrils. A huge, pigeon-blood ruby glowed on the last finger of his left hand. He twisted it around twice before he spoke in the perfect English he had learned at Oxford.

"She is a charming girl. All you American girls are charming. You yourself are beautiful, mademoiselle."

Hilda raised a finger in a gesture.

"But I am not in love with you. I am in love with Blossom Wynn's escort. Listen." She leaned a little across the table. "Blossom's father is a millionaire. Her own money would more than restore El Cintra to its former glory. It—"

Dhan Hassan interrupted by striking the table. His burning black eyes glinted.

"Enough! Money is money, and love is love! In my country a man loves for love alone!"

Hilda smiled languorously. She was far too clever to continue in a mistake when she realized she had made one.

"Don't be so vehement, dear Mr. Hassan. I was merely mentioning a fact. Love for love alone! That is the way it should be, of course. You will meet Blossom again soon. I have tickets for the same masked ball she is attending. Would you like to go with me?"

The Arab looked in silence at the empty table where Blossom and Randall had been seated. He saw her there again in fancy—blond and lovely, blue-eyed and irresistible. His hot blood sang within his veins. Already admiration and interest was flooding him as it invariably did when he beheld intense beauty.

He turned sharply to the girl who eagerly awaited his answer.

"Take me with you!" he requested.

VIONNET'S studio was across the Seine near the Luxembourg.

Once a season a group of American artists studying in the colorful Latin Quarter paid their respects to the advent of spring by giving a masquerade ball there.

Blossom, upon hearing of it, had prevailed upon her father to obtain two tickets before he left for St. Cloud. Tickets were issued only by invitation. However, Blossom wanted them, and there was really nothing money could not purchase. In the end the stout, ruddy-faced Texas oil magnate had returned to their suite at the Hotel Lafayette with two of the precious tickets in his possession.

In the taxi that took Pierce Randall and herself into the Boulevard Raspail, Blossom was a charming Maid Marion, with a fetching little Sherwood Forest hat over her golden curls. Randall

was dressed as Robin Hood. They sat together, close and silent with thought, while the taxi dashed blithely along in the manner of all Paris taxis.

"Father telephoned from St. Cloud," Blossom was saying. "He won't be back until Monday. I told him I had a big surprise for him. The surprise is you, sweetheart!"

Randall took her in his arms. He laid his warm cheek against her cool, creamy ivory one, and kissed the yellow curls under the tight brim of her cap.

"You're certain you love me, dearest?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"This is the first time you've been really and truly in love," Randall pointed out. "It would be awful for you to make the mistake I so narrowly escaped."

"I'm certain!" Blossom whispered. "Pierce, you don't love Hilda — you don't love her—*now?*"

His reply was to find her lips with his own.

"You're the only one I love—the only one I'll ever love!"

The taxi drew up before the Vionnet Art School, and in another round of minutes Blossom, penetrating the main studio, found herself in the center of scintillating saturnalia.

All the artistic youth of Paris had apparently gathered there. A negro orchestra blared jazz. Hanging lanterns were like colored moons. Below them a restless, hilarious, gay throng of dancers swept along to the rhythm of syncopation. Clowns and Columbines, Harlequins and Pierrettes. Cavaliers, soldiers, dancing girls, pirates, and Spanish señoritas, swathed in gaudy shawls with eyes peering above crimson veils.

Before they had taken a dozen steps the dance ended; the throng swept Blossom away from Pierce Randall, and the next minute a hand touched her arm.

"Maid of Sherwood Forest," a clear voice said vibrantly, "long have I awaited our meeting!"

BLOSSOM'S heart seemed to skip a beat. Dhan Hassan, in his white sheik robes, a striped sash about his slender waist, and wearing a burnoose to match, stood before her. Again his hypnotic, blazing gaze seemed to scorch Blossom with its intensity.

"You!" she said faintly, annoyed by her involuntary exclamation of recognition.

His hand touched her arm, moving down it until his fingers were over her wrist. Then the music crashed out and dream-like she was in his arms, matching his steps with her own, dancing with him!

"So you remember me from the other day? That is well. I, too, remembered you. You were in my dreams when I saw you. Something told me then that you, of all others, were meant to grace my lonely tent on the burning sands of Nejd!"

Blossom stared at him. He must, of course, be playing a rôle. Still, there was a vibrant note in his voice that had the ring of sincerity to it.

"I am betrothed to Robin Hood," she told him faintly.

Hassan's black eyes snapped.

"The notorious English thief! Bah! I will jump on my steed and recover the heart he stole from you!"

"But suppose I object to that?"

"It is not what you wish—it is what *I* desire!" His eyes grew remote. "Mademoiselle, you are as lovely as the dawn! The pearly, pink dawn of

Biskra! Fate has intended you to be mine! I am madly in love with you! I, Sheik Dhan Hassan, love you!"

They had reached the very end of the studio. Without forewarning Hassan whirled her out of the press of the throng and into the starry dark of a balcony overlooking a small courtyard below. His arms went about her slim, tremulous figure. His robe sheltered her like the tent he had spoken of, and his breath, a hot wind from the desert, touched her face and brow.

For an eternity that lived within a trembling second, Blossom knew the hungry crush of his arms. Then his lips had fastened savagely over hers in a delirious kiss, and his words, low and exulting, thundered in her ears like the crash of drums.

"The seal of my love! Mademoiselle, to-night, and many other nights we will be apart! But remember this —I am coming for you! When I leave Paris you will leave with me! We go together—following the sun of love into the south—into Nejd and the desert!"

He melted away, and Blossom found herself alone.

Unsteadily she clung to the iron rail of the balcony, her mind confused and her heart throbbing wildly. The strangeness of the kiss and Hassan's declaration seemed to rob her momentarily of the power of thought and fill her with confusion. He loved her! He had set his kiss as a seal upon her lips! He had vowed that when he returned to his own country she would be with him!

BLOSSOM! What are you doing out there? I've been chasing all over for you!"

Pierce Randall was beside her.

With an effort Blossom fought for and found a measure of control. Then and there she should have told him what had happened. She wanted to tell him, wanted to unburden herself, but something placed a seal upon the lips the Arab had kissed.

"I — it was so stuffy in there — I came out to get a breath of air."

"Blossom, you're trembling!" Randall cried, his arms a sanctuary about her. "What's the matter? What has happened?"

Blossom forced a smile.

"Nothing — I'm nervous to-night. The noise, excitement and everything have given me a headache. Pierce!" she exclaimed. "Take me back to the hotel. I don't think I like this ball!"

"Take you back?" Randall's tone was full of surprise. "But, sweetheart, do you really want me to? While I was looking for you I ran across Hilda. She's here, too, as Cleopatra."

"Hilda?" Blossom echoed, looking up at him swiftly.

"I never realized what a good sport she is," Randall went on. "She congratulated me when I told her of our engagement. Absolutely no rancor or disappointment there. She wants us to sit at her table during supper and meet this Arab friend of hers. Must we go home, dearest?"

To Blossom it seemed as if invisible forces were weaving a net for her. All at once she grew deathly afraid—afraid of herself, of Dhan Hassan and her future with this tall, good-looking American boy whose arms held her so safely.

"Please take me home, Pierce," she begged earnestly.

The taxi they took retraced their course to the Seine, across it and into the Place de la Concorde. Blossom's head rested against Randall's broad shoulder. Her temples throbbed cruel-

ly until, after a space, the pain gave way to a new, indefinable emotion.

"Pierce!" she whispered throatily. "Hold me closer. I—I'm afraid!"

"Afraid of what, sweetheart?"

Blossom compressed her red lips.

"I—I don't know!" she answered in a colorless, small voice.

But deep in her heart Blossom did know—did understand.

HILDA CLAVELL had every reason to be quietly satisfied when she awoke in her room at the *pension* where she lived on the *Rue Eaux-Bonnes,* the morning after the masquerade at the Vionnet Art School.

When Hassan had greeted Blossom Wynn, Hilda had been watching. When the Arab sheik whirled the girl she hated out of the tangle of dancers and onto the balcony, Hilda had skirted the floor to take up an unobserved position where she could hear and see what transpired. Both the Arab's declaration of love and his mad kiss had filled Hilda with elation. Dhan Hassan was thoroughly in love with Blossom. Until the ball ended at dawn he talked of nothing but the blond, beautiful American girl he had held within his arms.

Remembering, Hilda dressed slowly.

So far her plans had worked smoothly and without mishap. There was still a climax to arrange. That was no inconsiderable feat. To break Blossom's engagement to Pierce Randall completely would require consummate skill and cleverness. Most of all, Hilda, planning that Randall should turn once more to herself for sympathizing comfort, knew that the slightest error would send him away from her, this time forever.

If she was to take Blossom out of his arms and put herself within them, infinite caution was necessary so that no gleam of suspicion might cross Randall's mind. Hilda wanted Pierce Randall for her husband more than she had ever wanted anything in all her selfish, scheming life.

But how, *how* was she to win him?

While the girl in the bedroom of her *pension* racked her mind, Blossom had breakfast in bed at the Hotel Lafayette. Susi, her little Alsatian maid, tiptoed in toward the end of the repast carrying a huge sheaf of scarlet La France roses. She laid them on the table beside the canopied bed.

"A messenger from Jouhant's delivered them five minutes ago, mademoiselle."

Blossom turned the attached envelope over and drew out the inclosed card. The thought of Pierce ran through her mind. But the card was not his. It was a plain, ordinary card supplied by the florist, and Dhan Hassan had written his name across it, below five words.

In memory of last night.

With a haggard glance at the roses, Blossom tore the card into small pieces. Fear had haunted her troubled dreams. Fear forged a new band about her heart. She raised her glance to find the bright gaze of Susi upon the flowers.

"Ah, mademoiselle!" the maid cried softly. "Love is so—so exquisite! My sweetheart—*tiens!* Never does he send me a single flower!"

"Take these, Susi! You may have them."

"But, mademoiselle—"

"Take them!" Blossom insisted. "Put them away where I won't see them!"

Susi obeyed, shaking her head se-

cretly. Had mademoiselle quarreled with her tall, good-looking admirer? Americans, Susi had long ago decided, were the most dissatisfied race in the world. They never knew when they were well off.

For two days Blossom literally looked fearfully over her shoulder whenever she was on the street. Motoring with Pierce along the Champs Elysees. At the Auteuil races. In the smart shops on the Rue de la Paix. In the theaters, cinemas and music halls—at any moment she expected Sheik Dhan Hassan to step up beside her and, before Randall, take her in his arms and find her lips with his own!

Every morning Hassan's crimson La France roses were handed to the puzzled Susi, but the Arab himself did not follow his floral tributes in person. When two more days elapsed Blossom began to breathe more freely. Perhaps, after all, Hassan's fervor had been aroused on the impulse of the moment and had died as quickly.

But the flowers? She had almost forgotten them. Their arrival each morning did not bear out her hopeful supposition.

Blossom pondered the matter. She feared Hassan, while at the same time she was fascinated and drawn to him. She asked herself if that could mean she was not as much in love with Randall as she believed. Pierce's kisses had never made her half swoon. Pierce was comfort and stability. This dark, handsome sheik from the burning sands of the desert was and might well continue to be a dread mingling with ecstatic excitement.

Was love ever born out of fear?

While she awaited the return of her father, Blossom tried to answer her own questions. The night before he arrived, Susi stepped into the boudoir as Blossom was dressing for dinner, critically appraising her piquant reflection in the mirror as she turned and twisted before it.

"Mademoiselle, there is a gentleman who wishes to see you."

WHEN Blossom crossed the corridor and went into the parlor of the suite, Hassan, in evening clothes, turned from her framed photograph on the mantel. His hypnotic gaze flashed across to her. In silhouette against the mellow illumination of the floor lamp behind him, he looked distinguished, more handsome than ever, compelling and princely.

"Mademoiselle, we are dining together!" were Hassan's first words.

He took her small hand in his own and pressed a kiss in its pink palm.

"Our last dinner in Paris together—our first as well. I leave to-morrow at sunup on the Transcontinental Express."

Blossom faced him on trembling limbs. She seemed powerless to think or speak. A dozen harried emotions surged through her. While she stared at him with wide, transfixed blue eyes, Hassan's arms went about her.

"You have no engagement for this evening?"

It happened that hardly an hour before Randall had telephoned, breaking a dinner date they had made. Pierce had promised to explain later. The Arab must have read her thoughts correctly. His gaze, tone, and slender brown hands caressed her.

"You have no engagement, no appointment. Good! My last night in Paris will be a jewel in the treasure chest of memory. Blossom, look at me. Since the night of the ball you have thought of me often."

It was impossible to be anything but

truthful with his gaze so intent upon her.

"I—I have thought about you—"

He let her gold hair touch his face.

"Soon we shall share our love beneath the stars of Nejd. They are bright—like your eyes. All night you will be within my arms, and I will adore you. You will be the queen of my heart, the fairest flower of the desert, the rose of El Cintra!"

"No!" Blossom, like one emerging from a drugged dream, struggled wildly. "No! I am in love with some one else! I can never love you! Never—"

Gently and quite firmly he took her into his embrace. His arms were like steel that effectually made her realize the futility of escape. Once more he caressed her tenderly.

"There is no one else, my rose of the desert! We were made for one another as surely as the sun was made for the day and the moon for the night! A love like ours cannot be denied. Others mean less than nothing, less than the hot sands our horses will gallop across! You hear?"

Sweeping the screen away she faced—Pierce!

He kissed her then—a kiss of white fire—that made Blossom reel and grow dizzy under its spell. When he released her finally she sank down on the sofa, pressing one hand over her racing heart. Had she gone mad? Had life become a grotesque fantasy?

Or did the Arab speak the truth? Had they been made for each other?

"Mademoiselle's wraps! Be quick! Bring them instantly."

Hassan's voice and the arrival of Susi with her spangled hair veil and black velvet wrap aroused Blossom.

Then she was in a motor car that awaited them outside, and awhile later Dhan Hassan was escorting her through the shimmering light of a restaurant where violins played poignantly, a fountain splashed and perfumes cloyed the air.

IT was the Café Saphir, an exclusive rendezvous where foreign nobility came for the rare wines and tempting dishes of its famous chef. There were some who said that the scene of the immortal *Merry Widow* was laid within the portals of the Saphir. Toward the rear a short stairway led to the balcony, and on the balcony were dining cubicles, shut off from public view by high, painted screens.

Blossom sat down opposite Hassan. The dreamy, unreal feeling deepened. The music and the perfumes seemed to rob her of what little logic and sanity she had left. She grew conscious of food, of wines sparkling in crystalline glass, and presently of a familiar voice speaking amorously, plaintively, in the next booth.

"Pierce," Hilda Clavell was saying, perfectly aware that Hassan had played his own part perfectly and induced Blossom to visit the Café Saphir with him, "this cannot be the end! Your love could not have changed so quickly! You still love me—you are infatuated with Blossom! It will wear off in time, and then—"

The rest of it grew indistinct. Blossom's blue eyes grew round. Something cold stabbed her. Hilda and Randall! Why, she told herself, then Pierce had broken his dinner engagement with her to dine with Hilda!

She strained her ears, recognizing Randall's voice, but catching only a word or two of what he was saying. Hilda, who had arranged the situation as the climax of all her scheming, counted upon Randall's sense of sentiment to make it successful.

She had pleaded with him tearfully over the telephone that afternoon, telling him that it was her last night in Paris; that she must see him to say good-by forever. Vainly Randall tried to turn a deaf ear to her pleading. Finally he had agreed, not expecting the private cubicle behind the screen or the well-feigned sadness of the girl who spoke so poignantly of their past. It made him feel uncomfortable, awkward, and embarrassed. He impatiently awaited the conclusion of the meal so that he could get away.

Blossom, meanwhile, hardly tasted what was placed before her.

The ache in her heart grew. Pierce, after all, still cherished Hilda's memory enough to dine with her. Perhaps he regretted their own engagement. Was Hilda right in what she had said about love?

Was it a mistake—a fatal mistake on her part and his?

To Blossom the elapsing half hour was maddening. The haunting melody of the violins. Hassan's soft, beguiling voice. The indistinct conversation so close to her. The lights that gushed in seemed to break and splinter like falling stars, while she quivered under the lash of her tormented thoughts.

"Kiss me, Pierce!"

Hilda's rising voice was a stinging barb that Blossom could not withstand. She sprang up and out of the booth. Sweeping the screen away she gazed upon what was revealed to her in the adjoining compartment. Hilda stood there, her languorous, rounded arms linked about Pierce Randall's neck.

The crash of the falling screen tore them apart. Randall turned to her with a throaty cry.

"Blossom! Let me explain—"

How long she stood there, trying to find words to answer him, Blossom never knew. Her next impression was of the stairs, the floor below, and the star-studded spring night outside. A steady arm went about her. Dhan Hassan murmured in her ear.

"What does it matter? What does anything matter when I love you so? Come with me to Nejd! There is nothing to hold you here now!"

With the scene in the private supper room limned on her inner vision, Blossom clung to him in a frenzy of doubt, despair, and strange rejoicing. At that moment she did not want ever to learn Pierce Randall's interpretation of the affair. What she had seen was enough. And Hassan, whose arms were about her, was offering her a new world, a new life and his exulting, triumphant love.

Fear left her like a receding wave.

"Dhan!" Blossom heard herself exclaiming wildly. "Take me with you —to the desert!"

IT was as the wife of Dhan Hassan that Blossom crossed the Gulf of Persia, penetrated the province of Nejd and reached El Cintra.

The small oasis village was lost in the burning white sea of the desert. A few huts were scattered behind fortifications thrown up against the approach of hostile tribes. Docile camels, small donkeys and fiery Arabian stallions came and left the settlement.

Veiled women walked the sun-parched village streets, bearing water jugs. Date sellers gathered under the trees in the late afternoon. Small children played with mongrel puppies, and always the constant thud, thud of desert drums shattered the heavy, hot silence.

Sheik Dhan Hassan, Blossom learned, was the ruler of El Cintra. It was he who counseled them in peace and led them in war. The home to which he took Blossom was long, rambling and spacious. The finest rugs of Persia sprawled across its glistening floors and hung from its white walls. Its appointments and furnishings had come from the Continent. Mosaic tiles and Moorish arches paved its entry and opened from one room to the other.

Burnoosed servants vied with one another to do their master's bidding.

To Blossom the burning desert sands and her husband's home at El Cintra were garish nightmares. Before a month was over she knew the truth. She did not love Hassan! Infatuation and the agonized strain of her overtaxed nerves had tricked her. It was Pierce she loved and had always loved —the Pierce she had turned away from blindly, without waiting for his explanation — without faith enough to believe in him!

The knowledge of what she had relinquished tormented her, filling her dreams at night with despair. Pierce —lost to her together with life she had given up for the desert. Each thought of him was a treasure she hugged to her desolate heart. The monotony of the blazing days and the long, cool nights drove her half mad with stifled regret. With a heroic effort she kept her husband from realizing the grief brimming over within her.

The hot summer passed.

Then Mortimer Wynn, waving the magic wand of wealth, came to El Cintra in a camel caravan. Her father had made the journey hopeful of taking her back with him.

For the harried Blossom his coming was a cruel event. She would not let

him know her heart-broken sorrow. What good to go back and take up the threads of the life she had thrown away? Without Pierce Randall life would be empty anywhere on earth.

So, by strained pretense, Blossom said good-by to her father when his visit ended, and watched the long file of camels melt into the dim, sandy distances, while scalding, hopeless tears wet her browned cheeks.

The fall of the year came, but without change in Nejd except that the days grew a trifle shorter. Then, when the month was almost out, a letter came to Blossom. It was from Pierce Randall:

If this ever reaches you it will tell you that I have seen your father and learned of your happiness. For weeks, months, I have waited my chance to end your doubting. I cannot yet believe your love for me is dead. Blossom, if you still love me send word—

There was more, but Blossom could not read it to the end. Her happiness? Her love for him! Such things were torture!

Two months later Hassan left for Paris. He wanted Blossom to accompany him, but she could not bear the thought of a return to the world's siren city. Better to hide her sorrow in the desert than walk familiar streets and view landmarks that would bring the remembrance of Pierce so sharply back. Sheik Dhan Hassan was absent two months. The night of his return natives were assembled for his arrival; Blossom heard them shout as Hassan rode in on a milk-white stallion.

SHE went below to meet him. His polished boots glimmered. He did not kiss her, but took her arm and led her into the room off the main foyer. There Hassan threw off his burnoose and lighted a cigarette with some of his old, jaunty grace.

"Late in the summer," he began, "my love for you faded. You see? I went to Paris in search of a new love. I have brought her back with me. She is outside now, one of the dancing girls from the Saphir. I thought," he added carelessly, "it was best you know."

For a tense minute Blossom faced him. His cool, casual statement was like a blow in the face.

"You intend to divorce me, Dhan?"

Hassan shrugged.

"Not necessarily." He made a gesture, the huge ruby on his finger glowing like a splash of blood. "When did you cease to love me? Did you ever love me? I pride myself upon my intuition. From the first day we arrived here I knew you did not care for me!"

Blossom opened her dry, tight lips. "You must divorce me, Dhan!"

"You are in the desert. There is no divorce here, no law save that of my own making. Besides, why should I free you to go back to the American you gave up for me—the sweetheart you were tricked out of?"

"*Tricked out of?*"

The Arab's laugh was low and strident.

"Exactly. You were beaten by that girl—that Mlle. Clavell. She was too clever for you. That night at the Saphir—it was all arranged for your benefit. And now she has him. I dined with her in Paris. She told me—they are to be married on the first day of the new month! Do you want your divorce now?"

Hassan caught up his robe, and with another laugh left her.

White lipped, Blossom swayed. She gripped the carved edge of a table beside her, clinging to it while black

specks danced before her eyes. What a fool she had been! She had played directly into Hilda's hands! She had given away and squandered her own heart's happiness!

Stiffly, trance-like, Blossom stared through the open door beyond. The dancing girl from Paris came in, servants bearing her luggage. She was slim and white skinned, small and vivacious. Her laughter filled the outer foyer and Blossom crushed a hand against her heart. Then, slowly, while Hassan's murmurous voice and the quiet patter of the servant's feet dwindled on the upper landing, a determination filled Blossom with hope.

Even yet it was not too late!

She crept away to her own lonesome chamber. It was the work of minutes to gather together her few belongings. The money Mortimer Wynn had left her for an emergency she stuffed into her blouse. In twenty minutes Blossom had blown out the oil lamp and was tiptoeing down the stone steps. The courtyard received her, stained with the silver shine of the desert stars. Out beyond the oasis trees the drums were thumping and fresh fires leaped up, ruddy against the sable draperies of night.

The stables were off to the left. The handsome stallion that Blossom had ridden during her stay at El Cintra whinnied at her approach. She led him out, saddled him with the silver inlaid saddle Hassan had presented to her. Another minute and she was beyond the walls, out upon the trackless desert that washed the little village like a relentless, gigantic sea.

THE soft, muffled beat of her mount's hoofs assumed a rhythm of their own. *Tricked—tricked—tricked!* Then, changing the tempo, they beat out the name of the one she loved. *Pierce—Pierce—Pierce!* Blossom's thoughts whirled about in her mind like dervishes. The first day of the new month—Pierce lost to her—love buried deep in the grave of her own digging!

Suddenly Blossom realized she was pursued. A horseman in silhouette against the moon loomed upon a sandy undulation of the desert to the left of her. Off to the right, she barely discerned other horsemen, and her heart seemed to cease beating.

Hassan!

Blossom wheeled and gave her Arab stallion its head.

The lone horseman rode up to her rapidly. There was a pause, and then her husband's hand was tight over her arm.

"'You are leaving?" In the moonlight his face was grim, the pigeon-blood ruby ring flashed like an evil eye. "I missed you at once. I have ridden hard and fast to overtake you. But too late, too late—"

Blossom parted her lips. The words had a fatalistic, ominous ring.

"You—you mean—"

Dhan Hassan gestured into the south.

"Some of the tribesmen of Akaba. Enemies! There is not a single chance that we will both escape!" He sat his saddle, as imperious and regal as that first afternoon Blossom had seen him in the Hotel Lafayette. "I will hold them off. You can ride away—free. The stallion comes from Hamad. He will take you there safely. You have money, there are airplanes at Tiriz. Once across the gulf you will be safe and your journey short—"

Blossom, something cold clamping the fingers of dread about her heart, clutched his arm.

"Dhan! Why do you let me go—"

His grim, handsome face wore a proud smile.

"To atone for the past. I tricked you, too. But love cannot be forced. And love is never infatuation, madness. We often learn that—too late. Be quick!" From under his white robe he drew a brace of silver-mounted pistols. "Ride fast — you will reach Hamad by dawn. And now—one last kiss!"

His lips were cold and deathly upon her own. Without another word Blossom left him there and rode away. Over the next sand waves she heard the distant crack of pistol shots. She looked back over her shoulder, through the starshine and moonlight that gave the desert a spectral light.

Hassan's horse was without a rider. The enemy tribesmen were bending over a figure that lay outstretched on the sand at their feet.

IN Paris, Pierce Randall looked at his reflected image in the glass. The valet who attended him spoke softly.

"Ah! If I may be permitted to say it, monsieur makes the perfect figure of a bridegroom. The motor, m'sieu. It is waiting—"

Closing the door on his bachelor quarters, which were located midway down the length of the old *Rue Antoine*, Randall descended the stairs and stepped into the Citroen limousine that was waiting to take him to the Hotel Lafayette.

Paris, as he rode through its streets, was a haunted city. Everywhere memory conjured up the blue eyes and golden glinting hair of Blossom.

The car turned the corner of the *Rue Victor Hugo*. Randall recalled dashing around that same corner with Blossom in her little creamy chamois coat that long, long ago afternoon. There were a group of people on either side of the entrance into the hotel, kept back by two gendarmes. Randall smiled thinly at their excitement. He told himself that when he returned to the car again it would be with Hilda beside him and as her husband.

The chauffeur opened the door and he stepped out onto a length of carpet beneath a protecting canopy. He shut his eyes for a minute before beginning the walk that was to end before the altar. It was when he had reached the first broad step of the Lafayette that Blossom, pushing her way through the crowd, saw him.

For a dizzy minute she was certain she could never identify herself, speak his name, let him know that she was there—that she had come to him across the desert and thousands of weary, anxious miles.

"Here! Mademoiselle, it is not allowed! Stand back—"

A fiercely mustached gendarme loomed up beside Blossom. He caught her arm and pulled her back. The crowd laughed at her discomfiture, the pleading light in her blue eyes. Some people, they thought, could not get close enough to weddings and funerals.

Despairingly, Blossom felt herself being drawn back to the edge of the throng. She made one last, ineffectual effort to shake off the hand of the law. The gendarme held her more tightly, and then—

Out of the laughter and murmur of voices the one voice in all the world she had yearned so to hear spoke beside her.

"One minute, officer! *Blossom*—"

Pierce Randall's arms went about her. The morning sun was abruptly

blotted out, and Blossom, with a little quivering sigh, felt herself dropping down into the well of darkness opening at her feet.

SHE opened her eyes to the aromatic tang of a volatile scent, in one of the rooms off the lobby of the Hotel Layafette. She was stretched out on a leather lounge, and Pierce Randall knelt beside her, his fingers locked with hers. Blossom smiled up at him like a sleepy child awakening from a bad dream.

"I couldn't let Hilda win," she whispered. "I had to come to you! I hope I'm not too late! I love you, and that makes it harder, Pierce. Perhaps you've forgotten—"

"Forgotten!"

His kiss, deep, slow and miraculous, seemed reward enough for all the wasted time that had run like a troubled river to a dark, unhappy sea.

"Then you still love me?" Blossom said, her fingers straying through his hair.

Randall drew her close and held her to his heart.

"Always! Love, sweetheart," he told her, "comes but once—a love like ours!"

Ecstasy

A LOOK from your eyes
And my soul grows strong,
Lifting like light
To the realms of song.

One touch of your hands
And my little fears
Vanish like sighs
And the mist of tears.

A kiss from your mouth
And my glad heart knows
The witching rapture
Of each wild rose.

Edgar Daniel Kramer

Nervously she drew a cup of coffee, not meeting his eyes

Happiness Junction

Trains that passed in the night at a little railroad junction brought two hearts together

By Izola Forrester

KITTY BROWN worked in the little railroad restaurant at Alpena, New York. Alpena was a junction. It lay midway between the hills where one railroad slipped away west through a tunnel and another one cut southeast over a big trestle.

Beside the tracks stood a general store with a sign which said: "Groceries and Grain, Luther R. Meade." The Meades were related to Kitty in some way; she had never had it fully figured out to her, but she called them aunt and uncle. Aunt Maria had appeared at her mother's funeral when Kitty was twelve, and had taken possession of the child "as a matter of common humanity," so she said.

Kitty, who was now eighteen, was still with the Meades, working for her board and one dollar a week. She had a small room in the gable end of the house above the woodshed "ell." From her one window she could look out on the railroad tracks that ran directly in front of the house on their way to the high trestle.

The limited train, No. 41, passing through at 2 A.M., always wakened her. She would hear its whistle first, far off

in the hills, calling that it was coming, then the distant rumble that seemed to shake the ground, and finally the sweep of the long train speeding by the frame building, shaking it until the old rafters seemed to hum.

At the first long blast of the engine's whistle Kitty would waken and hop out of her bed, wrap a threadbare woolen bathrobe of her aunt's around her, and hurry to the window.

It was such a wonderful sight—beautiful lights gleaming at windows that gave Kitty her one fleeting glimpse at luxury!

Even the names of the sleepers thrilled her. She knew them by heart on No. 41—Elsinore, Yemassee, Fadette, Tokaneke—all of the romantic titles on each car. But none of the passengers on No. 41 ever saw Kitty. Even if they did glimpse her lamplight as a patch of yellow in the darkness of Alpena they never noticed it.

"THEY must be terribly rich!" she would sigh, a bit enviously.

She visualized the passengers as persons of extreme leisure. She even made up stories about them, all those luxurious people who could travel for pleasure between New York and points west.

Only the milk trains stopped at Alpena and one local a day. Of course, other express trains passed through, but they never seemed romantic or mysteriously thrilling as No. 41 did; probably because they came through in the daytime and had no lights.

She felt a certain possession of No. 41, because it wakened her and started her day as if it were some strange, mystical presence that swept on low flying wings through the valley, calling upon her to waken.

After it passed she would dress and go down the narrow back stairs and out the back door into the entry, where she found her lantern hanging on its wooden peg and lighted it.

The farm wagons would be rattling down the hill roads into Alpena around two thirty, with big heavy cans to be shipped off on the milk train. After this pulled out the men would want hot coffee and doughnuts or pie.

It had all happened, winter and summer, so many times ever since Kitty had first arrived in Alpena that it was as much a part of the day as the sunrise itself.

Her special duty was to get up when the limited went through and get over as soon as she could to the depot, start the fire in the big air draft stove, and draw fresh water for the coffee urn from the well across the road, carry it over in a pail and have the coffee going by the time her uncle strolled in to swap stories with the men on the milk wagons while she served at the long counter.

Then, around four, the last wagon would have gone rattling down the road and she would put out the fire under the urn, shut off the stove, and go back to the house for a little rest before it was time to get breakfast.

ONE day the big event happened. The limited whistled as usual that morning. Kitty wakened at its call and went to the open window.

It was warm outside, the balminess of late May in northern New York. The mingled perfume of white lilac and lilies-of-the-valley came up to her deliciously from the dew-wet garden below her window.

Over the distant rim of hills the full moon still hung in the luminous deep blue sky, so faint and wan it seemed like a nebulous bubble fading out

There was a hush all about her in the country stillness as if everything was listening.

A white moth fluttered against her screen as she lit her lamp. She lifted the screen to let it escape, then leaned on the sill, looking out.

The train rushed by and all things trembled at its passing. Kitty drew in a deep breath and turned from the window to dress. The lamp chimney was smoking, so she stopped to turn it lower. Then, at the washstand, she poured out water from the cracked blue-and-white pitcher to wash in.

She was brushing her hair before the dresser looking-glass when she was aware of something happening that was different, startlingly different. The limited had slowed down at the trestle and was now going backward.

Kitty was so amazed that, forgetting she was in her nightgown, she ran to the open window to see what had happened.

The observation car, with its gleaming railing, passed and she had her best chance of seeing into its car, but the sleepers moved along, one after another, as the train came to a standstill, and Fadette was directly down there on the track in front of Kitty's window.

Something was wrong up near the trestle. She could see trainmen running along with red lanterns and the engine whistled five times—long, troubled calls that rang out through the silent valley. Then she saw her uncle rush out, half dressed, and run toward the station to open it up.

SUDDENLY Kitty discovered that some one was looking at her. In the compartment opposite her window she could see a young man lying in a berth.

He was peering out of the window, trying to discover what was wrong up ahead. Since the one spot of light in the whole landscape of the night was Kitty's window, he was gazing up at that and at the slim figure outlined against the yellow lamplight—a girl with her hair tumbled about her shoulders in a white nightgown. He switched on his own overhead light and called up to her:

"Hello, can you see what's the matter?"

Kitty shook her head and stepped back nervously. She tried to pull down the old green cambric shade, but it broke from the roller and fell, leaving her more embarrassed than ever—whereupon the young man laughed up at her.

She blew the lamp out quickly and stood in the darkness with her heart beating wildly, until, as he still stared curiously up at her window, she drew far back in a corner and dressed herself with cold, trembling fingers.

While she was dressing Mrs. Meade called to her:

"Hurry up, Kitty! There's some sort of trouble over at the trestle, not an accident, just something wrong and the limited is delayed."

Kitty ran across the stretch of road to the depot and found her uncle there with the conductor, trying to get long distance.

She hurried the coffee and had everything ready, but no one came to eat. The men went back up the track toward the engine, and Kitty stepped over to the door to look out.

The observation car was close to the end of the platform, and the first thing she saw was the boy who had waved to her. He was standing on the platform in his bathrobe, a gray overcoat thrown about his shoulders.

He waved to her again, a friendly greeting, but the girl moved back into the depot where he could not see her. Then he jumped the railing and came up the track to the narrow wooden platform that ran as far as the freight house.

KITTY knew he was coming in the depot even before she glanced up and found him right there by the counter, smiling at her.

"Got anything to eat?" he asked.

"Just coffee and pie and crullers. You better look out your train doesn't start up."

She turned to the coffee urn and drew a cup hurriedly, spilling some on her hand.

"Gee, that's too bad! You burned yourself, didn't you?"

He was frowning solicitously, but Kitty laughed.

"Oh, it's all right," she protested.

A whistle sounded up ahead and the train gave a warning joggle throughout its length.

"I'd better bring it out to you," Kitty said. "You get back on the train."

It was the first time anything thrilling had ever happened in her whole life. She carried the cup of coffee and a plate of doughnuts out to where he waited, perched on the brass railing, watching for her.

"Thank you so much," he said.

There was no one around the depot. They were alone with the dark hills and no sound in the stillness but the labored puffing of the engine way up ahead on the track and the peep frogs calling over in the meadow along the brook.

He drank the coffee and Kitty waited to carry the cup and saucer back, but he held them, eating the doughnuts leisurely as he asked her name.

"Kitty Brown," she told him shyly.

"Mine's Bob Curry," he said, handing her a card from his overcoat pocket. "You can't read it now, but keep it anyway," he added.

It was getting lighter in the eastern break of the valley. She could see his face better now. His hair was brown and rather curly and rumpled, while his eyes were hazel and half closed when he laughed.

It seemed to Kitty as if there was something dangerously intimate and sweet in the two of them being alone out there at that hour. She hardly dared look into his eyes at all as he talked to her about how he traveled around most of the time. Automobile paint and enamel was his line. He had often whizzed through this little lonesome place in the hills without even knowing its name.

"It's Alpena," Kitty told him. "I hope you'll remember it."

"Kitty Brown, Alpena, New York," he said. "Sure I'll remember. I'll send you picture post cards. How would you like that?"

"I'd love it!" she answered impulsively. "I never get mail from any one at all."

THEY laughed at each other intimately, although there certainly was nothing to laugh at, while the light in the east changed to palest wild rose pink, a suffused radiance that suddenly tipped everything it touched. Roosters were crowing behind the store and over in distant farmhouses. Birds were twittering in the trees and bushes.

Bob climbed over the rail, and together they walked slowly back up to the depot. It wasn't hard to talk to

Kitty. Her face was colored like an apple blossom, her eyes were brown and tender and just a little bit frightened.

"It's awfully funny, our meeting this way, isn't it?" he asked. "I just happened to wake up and look out. There you were, standing up at your window looking down at me! And the train was held up so long, too—long enough for us to get really acquainted with each other. It's queer how you meet some one like that, and all at once you feel as if you've known them all your life." Then, as an afterthought: "Don't you somehow feel that way, too, Kitty?"

She blushed and laughed.

"Yes, I suppose I do."

The whistle sounded warningly, and he took her hand.

"You won't forget me, will you?"

Kitty promised earnestly, looking up into his face:

"No, I am quite sure I can never forget you, Mr. Curry."

All at once he remembered that he hadn't paid for the coffee and doughnuts.

"Oh, that's all right," said Kitty.

She felt embarrassed as he handed her fifty cents. The train rumbled and some one was calling "All aboard," so he had to run.

She longed to ask when he was coming through Alpena again, but it was too late. The train was moving, gathering speed, and he stood on the platform waving to her. Surely his last gesture was a kiss blown back to where she stood.

"Good-by, good-by, Kitty!" he called.

She stood absolutely motionless, watching the disappearing train with wide enchanted eyes as it curved around the bend, its whistle calling triumphantly that everything was all right and it was on its way.

FROM that hour life was changed for Kitty. She had something to look forward to now. Whenever she heard No. 41 approaching Alpena at 2 A.M. it seemed to remind her:

"He's coming, coming, coming."

It flung the challenge to the hills and they echoed it until Kitty would feel her cheeks flame with happiness and she would hide her head in her pillow.

The mail sack was tossed off once a day. Usually it held only a small package of letters, a bundle of county newspapers and a few mail order catalogues. One of her daily duties was to sort the mail and place it in the little wooden pigeonholes on the rack by the cash register.

Every day she watched for post cards, fearing that they might come and that they might not. She dreaded Mr. or Mrs. Meade finding them, joking over her getting them. They'd sneer and tear them up.

So day by day she watched the mail, dreading and hoping until, on a Saturday, one came for her! It was from Chicago, with a picture of the big Union Station and a message:

How's this for a depot? Wish you were here. Yours, BOB.

That was all, but Kitty laughed over it, with tears in her eyes, and read it over and over. He was real—it wasn't just a dream—it was a wonderful true secret!

She hugged it to her heart for days and went around her duties with a little inscrutable smile on her lips.

The post cards came quite regularly after that, two a week, sometimes three, all from different cities. Kitty looked up where Bob was on the

folders, and kept the cards hidden inside her pillow. She had ripped open one end to hide them there, and sewed it up each time she received a new one.

Then, after about a month, there came a letter with a snapshot of himself. She held the picture in her hands, gazing at it admiringly whenever she was alone. Across it he had written, "Yours, Bob."

And the letter! She was almost frightened when she finally summoned up courage to read it, in her room with the door locked.

DEAR KITTY:

Hello, sweetheart, how's Alpena? I wish I could see you again some way! I'll never forget how pretty you looked that night up at the window and when you said good-by to me.

I can't seem to forget you, and I'm sending you a picture of myself for fear you may forget me. You never will, Kitty, will you? It's funny when you see a person only once and you can't forget them, isn't it? That's me.

Every Saturday when I land in some town for the week-end I wish you lived there; then I get to wondering if you would come to me if I ever sent for you. Of course you wouldn't, but I just get to thinking what if you should. If I go some place all the songs seem to be written about you, and when I look at a girl with blue eyes, gee, I wish I had a girl I know with brown. No kidding.

Next Saturday I have to lay over in Toledo, and the week after that I guess it will be Cincinnati. How would you like to meet me there at 8:05 P.M.? Think it over. In the Union Station. Yours,

BOB.

SHE did not put this inside the pillow, but slept with it pressed close to her cheek and clasped it in her two hands. All the week she thought and dreamed. She had over forty dollars saved up, and she was eighteen. She didn't have to stay and work for the Meades any longer if she didn't want to. They couldn't do a thing about it if she chose to go away.

She wrote a letter and left it on the cash register, and when the Friday night local pulled out of Alpena, Kitty found herself on board.

She had waited until the very last minute, until the brakeman swung his lantern and called "All aboard," then she had climbed up the steps to the platform of the second car and hurried inside before the train should pass the store. She took a seat where she could not even see the house, and turned her face to the dark window pane as the train started west.

She must have slept some time during the night, because she was awakened by a finger tapping her on her shoulder. It was the conductor.

"You're getting off here, aren't you?" he asked. "Hurry up! The train stops only a few minutes. I almost forgot you."

Kitty sat up and recovered her hat from the floor and her bundle of belongings. She did not own a suitcase, nor, for that matter, did she possess very much to fill one.

She followed the conductor down the aisle and steps to the station platform. It seemed dark and smoky inside, or perhaps it was steam. She stood still looking around her sleepily.

It was so different from anything she had ever seen before, the huge train shed and all the tracks with headlights of incoming trains and backing trains, and whistling trains. The bells clanged on those leaving, every one seemed hurrying around her, and she had to jump out of the way as a big baggage truck rolled by.

She was pushed and jostled until she let herself drift with the crowd along the platform and through a big iron grilled gateway, where an old man

in uniform was calling through a red megaphone:

"All aboard on Track No. 4! Springfield, Columbus, Toledo. All aboard on Track No. 4!"

KITTY stood listening to the megaphone man with round, interested eyes, but she moved into the waiting room when she saw that he had noticed her. It was only seven-twenty by the round clock over the archway to the restaurant. She would have to wait all day until Bob got in at eight five. Not that she minded terribly, it was all too new and exciting.

She found a corner and made herself comfortable. She was not hungry yet, so she sat and watched the people coming and going, and was thrilled as she saw reunions and partings.

"This," she thought, "is the real drama of life."

Her heart beat to the tempo of the busy station. She heard the sound of bells clanging in engines out in the train shed and far down the tracks.

"*Ding dong, ding dong.*"

They were different from the whistles in the hills back at Alpena. These said insistently:

"Come along, come along, we'll be gone, we'll be gone."

They were hurrying the people up, worrying them, pulling them away.

Most of all, Kitty found herself listening to the old train announcer. It was so wonderful to stand in his place all day long, calling trains from the east, trains from the west, trains from the sea and the desert and the great cities. She watched him, fascinated every time he lifted his red megaphone.

Once he called the train that went through Alpena, Dayton, Youngstown. It would round about and come out through the tunnel under the hills and pass Alpena, but it did not make the girl homesick, she only tingled with happiness over her escape.

Kitty strained her eyes to see beyond the gate where people were arriving and being met by friends. When the eight five came in she would meet Bob, she would see him far ahead of the crowd coming toward her.

Just the very thought of their meeting made her almost faint with ecstasy. She wondered if he were looking forward to it as much as she was.

AT first Union Station overlooked her. A railroad terminal is too large and busy a place, with ever-passing throngs of strangers, to pay attention to one small, eager-faced girl.

But after Mr. Wilson, the announcer, had called trains all the morning and into the afternoon, he began to wonder why some one didn't meet the little girl over in the corner with the paper-wrapped bundle and the big brown eyes.

Looked as if she must be waiting for some one, but she didn't act at all worried, only expectant and interested in everything. And, so far as he could see, she hadn't eaten anything but some bananas and peanuts she'd bought from the fruit stand.

Finally he called the incoming express from St. Louis, on Track No. 9. Kitty hurried to the gate.

"Can I go through?" she asked as the train pulled in and passengers began to get off.

"Run right along," Mr. Wilson said.

She gave him the most sparkling of smiles and fairly flew down the platform. She watched every face that passed, and finally arrived at the last car, breathless and troubled.

But there was no sign of Bob Curry anywhere in the good-natured, jostling crowd!

The throng thinned out rapidly, and presently the train was pulling out. Kitty was left alone, standing there looking after it incredulously, until a baggage truck came along and she remembered that she must get out of its way. The boy riding on it turned to give her a curious look, she seemed so disappointed.

She drifted with the crowd into the big, strange station

Back in the station she hunted everywhere, thinking she must have missed him. Even outside, where the taxi stand was, she looked all around for him, and down in the baggage room, then back into the station, bewildered and afraid.

"It must be my fault," she thought. "I missed him somehow, and he'll think I never came at all."

She sat in her corner thinking it over, all the thrill ebbing out of her tired body. She opened his letter and read it carefully. No, she hadn't made any mistake. This was the city and the Union Station he had told her to come to.

Maybe Bob had made a mistake himself, maybe he had forgotten which Union Station he had told her to come to, maybe he thought it was Toledo. No doubt he was hunting everywhere for her that very moment and thinking she had failed to meet him.

Oh, he knew she would come to him, that was why he had sent for her. He knew she would surely come to him. That was the wonderful part of their romance, they had loved each other at first sight.

She smiled, remembering, a little

anxious smile that curved her lips and left them quivering.

MR. WILSON watched her anxiously, and strolled over to where Mrs. Cummings sat rocking in the ladies' waiting room.

"That girl has been waiting since early morning, and it looks as if she's missed some one," he said.

Jimmy, the boy at the check room, also had been keeping one eye on Kitty Brown all day, she was so pretty. Now he came by from the lunch counter and handed her a chicken sandwich with a friendly, casual gesture.

"Oh, I thank you so much," Kitty said, with tears in her eyes, "but I'm not one bit hungry."

Jimmy went out on the platform, rebuffed, and told Matt, the big special policeman, about her. Matt strolled in and took a good look at her without appearing to.

The girl leaned back with her eyes closed, tired and forlorn-looking, until Mrs. Cummings spoke to her.

"Wouldn't you like to lie down inside, dearie? There's a couch you could rest on."

Kitty sat up, pushing back her hair from her face.

"Oh, I'm expecting some one, thank you. I'd better stay out where I'd be sure to see him. Is it against the rules for anybody to stay so long in the station when they have to meet some one?"

"No, indeed," Mrs. Cummings assured her cheerfully. "Stay as long as you like, only make yourself comfortable. I'll be here until midnight myself."

So Kitty stayed in her corner, watching faces until midnight came. Then, all at once, she seemed to crumple in her seat and cried softly in her handkerchief.

They tried to question her, Mr. Wilson and Mrs. Cummings and Jimmy—all the friendly, anxious regulars around the big station—but she only cried more, repeating over and over that she expected to meet a friend there.

"Isn't it a man?" Mrs. Cummings wanted to know.

Kitty would not answer. She set her lips stubbornly, and looked at them all with stormy, frightened eyes until Matt came to talk with her. He was big and easy-going, and he knew all about little girls who ran away from home to meet some one, so he questioned Kitty.

"But I'm eighteen," she flared back. "I haven't any of my own folks alive, and I've been working. I've got money I earned and I can rent a room, can't I, and work here? I haven't done anything wrong—I don't see why you're all talking at me."

"Perhaps," said Matt, "you might go home for the night with Mrs. Cummings. Then you could come back to the station in the morning and see whether your friend arrives during the day."

SO it was arranged, and Kitty went home with the matron, not knowing that Matt had told Mrs. Cummings to get all she could in the line of information.

Kitty talked freely the next morning over coffee and omelette and fresh muffins, told all about how she had worked for the Meades since her mother died, and even about Bob, how she had met him and how he had written to her to come and meet him there.

"Don't worry yourself about that

man, my dear," Mrs. Cummings said consolingly. "Men are mostly all alike, and that isn't saying much for the best of them. And traveling men are about the most uncertain of all. This one probably never meant a thing serious by his picture and post cards."

"Oh, but I'm sure he did! You don't know, Mrs. Cummings. You could tell just by looking at him that he wasn't that kind of person," Kitty protested eagerly, her eyes shining. "He was *dependable.*"

"I never knew a one that was," the matron said dryly. "You'd better come back with me to the station, and if you're as good a waitress as you say you are, and quick and willing, I know there's a place in the restaurant, because Mamie Kelly just got married. I can speak to Mr. Bingham about you, and probably get you on."

So Kitty became a part of Union Station. She secured the job as waitress after Mr. Bingham's first glance at her face and figure.

When she was off duty Kitty loved to change into another dress and go out into the big waiting room where she could sit and watch the arrivals and departures. Perhaps it was because she always watched for one face in the passing crowds with the hope that she might see Bob out there.

She would buy the travel magazines, get the railroad folders from the rack and read them over and over, wondering where he was traveling now.

KITTY had been working in the restaurant about a month. Whenever Saturday evening came around, she would stand by the gate as the eight five pulled in.

Jimmy didn't like it. Why did she still have to be thinking about a fellow who never showed up, while here he was himself always ready to show her a good time? Jimmy was the best-looking youngster around the station and wore his cap on the back of his head to give full play to one curling lock of hair that hung over his forehead.

Kitty roomed with Mrs. Cummings and Jimmy would see her home; not in a car, for he didn't own one, but in the trolley up from Railroad Square.

He was cheerful and nice, but he never thrilled her. She knew the difference: how, even if you just saw a person for the first time, and merely looked into their eyes and talked with them for awhile, you always thrilled to remember them.

One Saturday night as Kitty stood by the gate watching, all at once she thought she saw Bob Curry himself, way down the platform, swinging along in the crowd, his gray overcoat over one arm!

Her heart seemed to stop beating after one quick glad throb. She tried to keep him in sight, pushing her way past people to reach him, calling out his name.

He came through the gate, and now she discovered it really was Bob, looking for some one! Just as Kitty had almost reached him, she saw a girl come up with a laughing greeting. Bob took her arm, tucked it under his own, and they walked away together.

Kitty stood leaning against the side of the high iron grille fence, staring blankly into space. Her Bob had met another girl, he had not even thought about her, he had just gone on!

Presently she went back to the restaurant and put on her uniform. Saturday nights she had to go on duty for two hours in the rush. It was crowded inside, but Kitty saw her rival standing near the entrance waiting while

Bob went over to the checkroom and handed in a couple of traveling bags. When the man joined her he gave her a check, and they were shown to one of Kitty's tables.

The girl was leaning forward talking in a low voice and Bob listened with keen, half-closed eyes, smoking a cigarette and nodding his head.

When they ordered, he was scanning an evening paper, and the girl said they would take a couple of club steaks, rare, with French fried potatoes and coffee.

BOB glanced up carelessly at the waitress while she wrote the order down, and his face changed. Brown hair with a chestnut glow to it, and brown eyes, that met his own serenely without one trace of recognition.

He stared after her. His dinner companion, however, was happy and sure of herself, with elbows on the table as she smoked and talked. She had not noticed anything between Kitty and himself, but Bob was uneasy.

All through the serving of their dinner Kitty never showed that she had ever seen him before, not even with her heart beating fast, and her hands almost as cold as ice water.

Finally they rose to go. Bob left a dollar for a tip, and gave Kitty one long steady appealing look as he passed her.

He was back in ten minutes. The place was thinning out now and Kitty was not busy, although she pretended to be when she saw him sit down at the same table. Bob waited impatiently and finally spoke, eagerly, in a low tone.

"Kitty, come here, won't you?"

The amazing thing was when he pretended to be surprised that she was there at all, after he had sent for her.

"I never thought you'd come," he said, penitently. "Gee, here I've been thinking about you every day, honey, wondering whether you ever got my post cards and letter."

Kitty was quite gay and casual.

"Yes, I got them all right, only I never thought I'd see you again. Life's funny, isn't it? I came here to take a place in the restaurant when a friend of mine married, and I like it awfully well, much better than Alpena."

Bob swallowed hard without taking his eyes from her flushed, uplifted face.

"Say, just how long have you been working here?" he asked. "You came down after I wrote that letter, didn't you? Gee, I'm sorry, I—well, I never really thought you'd come."

"I wanted to, I had friends here."

Kitty walked away to wait on Jimmy, who had come in for his nightly ham and eggs. She lingered chatting with him while Bob waited and smoked up half a box of cigarettes.

WHEN she returned he tried to talk with her again and explain. She looked so pretty in her white uniform under the bright lights of the station. He found his heart giving the same warning it had when he had first seen her at Alpena, her hair tumbled about her shoulders up at the lamplit window.

He started to tell her about the girl who was with him.

"She isn't a personal friend of mine," he explained jerkily. "I just had to see her on business. We work for the same firm."

Kitty drew stars on the back of her check pad and smiled over at Jimmy.

Later, when Kitty was through, Bob walked with her along the platform down to the last seat beyond the baggage room and express office.

"I just had to talk with you," he insisted, but she was evasive and teasing. She laughed at his excuses.

"It really doesn't matter," she assured him. "Of course, I didn't come here expecting to meet you. How silly! But I'm glad to see you again, why not? Does your work bring you through every other Saturday? Isn't that nice? Perhaps I'll see you some other time."

Bob growled at this.

"You're right, Kitty, you *will* see me again," he told her. "The more I look at your sparkling eyes and tempting lips, the surer I am that I love you. Listen, honey, would you like to take a run uptown and dance awhile before I have to leave?"

"I thought you were staying here over the week-end," she reminded him.

Bob was confused.

"Not exactly. Sometimes I do, but to-night I have to go on the road."

Kitty looked at him as if she thought it was mighty queer just to get into a town and leave it the same evening.

Then she remembered, of course, he had stopped there on business and the girl had met him—the girl he knew only in a business way. But she didn't say this. She only made a rather funny confession. She told him she never had danced in her life.

"You poor kid!" Bob said. "You've had a rotten deal, but you're going to have a good time from now on. I knew all about it the first time I saw you, and now I'm sure of it. You're just all there is, see?"

KITTY looked straight ahead of her at the big shadowy train shed, the glass roof that had a look of deep water at night as if you were looking into it upside down and seeing reflections.

Bob put his arm around the girl and drew her nearer, trying to look into her eyes.

"You did come here to meet me that night, didn't you?" he accused, "And I wasn't here. I got orders to drop off at St. Louis and stay over there. And I never thought you'd come. Gee, I didn't know you even cared that much, Kitty, that you had that much faith in me, to make the trip and meet me here just because I asked."

She let him hold her close and pet her while the tears gathered on long lashes and fell, but just as he thought the trouble was over, Kitty wiped her eyes and blew her nose, and raised her head to look at him.

"Who was that girl?" she asked. "What was her name? She was awfully pretty and her clothes must have cost a lot, that white fur scarf, and her wrist watch, and she wore ten bracelets on one wrist, all set in diamonds."

"Oh, they weren't real," Bob said. "You don't want to believe everything you see. She's just a saleswoman for the firm I work for. I have to run into her every now and then and get a new list of prospects, that's all."

He was uneasy and glanced at his wrist watch.

"Gee, I have to make the eleven twenty-two!"

Kitty rose, her lips set firmly. All the way back to the waiting room she said nothing at all, while Bob talked about what they'd do next time he came through. When he took her hands to say good-by, he looked straight into her eyes.

"Listen here," he said, "you had faith enough in me to come way down to meet me, didn't you? And you cared enough, too, I know that. All right, then believe me now. That girl doesn't mean a thing in my life, see? And if

she did, I'd cut her out from now on. There's just you, Kitty. I'll be back in two weeks, and I'll write to you in care of the restaurant here. Good-by, dear. Won't you kiss me good-by even?"

No, she wouldn't; but her eyes were softer as she watched him go over to the check desk and get out a traveling bag. He waved to her, but she didn't want to see him off.

She went into the ladies' waiting room with Mrs. Cummings, and Bob took the eleven twenty-two.

THE news spread around the station that she had finally met the man she had watched and waited for. Mr. Wilson was rather pleased over the happy ending for Kitty, but Jimmy had something on his mind that he confided to Matt.

"I've seen the guy before, and there's something funny about him. He always comes to the check desk and throws down a couple of traveling bags, all right, but he takes out only one, leaves the other bag checked and goes away on a late train. Then, along about midnight, sometimes not until the next morning, the bag is called for by a porter with the check."

Matt thought it over and grinned.

"Ain't you a little bit jealous, Jimmy?" he asked. "Maybe it's a sample case or something to be delivered."

"I'll say," Jimmy rejoined meaningly. "All right, only just watch, will you? He's left the second bag here, that big black walrus one on the bottom row, see? And when you see a red cap come after it, follow him and find out where he delivers it, will you?"

Matt said he would, and kept one eye on the checkroom until about ten minutes of twelve when the big doors of the waiting room opened, a porter came in and went over to the check desk.

Jimmy handed out the walrus bag and Matt followed the boy out of the station leisurely. Saw him pass down the sidewalk to a waiting taxi and hand the bag in to a girl who wore a white fox scarf. The bracelets on her arm gleamed in the arc light as she reached for the bag and tipped the porter.

Matt took the taxi's number, and strolled back in the station.

"Well," Jimmy asked eagerly, "wasn't I right?"

Matt nodded.

"It certainly looks queer. But don't tell Kitty about it. She wouldn't believe it anyway. She'd only think you were sore at the other fellow."

Later he checked up on the taxi's number and found out its stand was up at the Palace Hotel. Calling up the house detective of the Palace, Matt went further, and got the girl's name.

She was registered as Lorraine Moore, Chicago, and had left a call for 7 A.M., as she was catching the seven fifty-five. She had stayed overnight at the Palace several times before, but always alone.

ALL that week Kitty went about her duties with a look of deep contented happiness in her eyes. Every day there came a long letter from Bob—from Chicago, and St. Louis, and then Cleveland and Buffalo.

He wrote that she mustn't worry about the other girl. From now on, he wasn't going to see her again. He'd told her so.

Kitty frowned at the mere mention of that person. But when Saturday night finally came at the end of the second week, she found herself thinking only of Bob and longing to see him again.

It was queer weather outside. Rainy and then foggy, the heavy white fog that drifted up from the marshes. Nearly all the trains were behind schedule, and the crowd before the bulletin board grew larger every minute.

As soon as she was off duty Kitty hurried to Mrs. Cummings's own dressing room to change her uniform for the new dress she had bought specially for to-night—dress, hat, shoes, stockings, gloves, even her hand bag, all in beige.

It was the first time she had ever owned anything like it. She posed happily before the door mirror, pulling her hat closer down over her ears so that the brown coque feathers covered them.

Mrs. Cummings put her head in the door to tell her there was a wedding party in the waiting room, bridal couple leaving on the eight five. Kitty watched them with sparkling eyes and fast beating heart—the bride was so pretty and every one was calling good-by—when the man up at the bulletin board rubbed out the chalked announcement after No. 25, and wrote:

"Will arrive eight twenty-seven—twenty-two minutes late, making up time."

Kitty strolled out along the platform and all at once the thought came to her, was the other girl waiting there to-night for Bob? She looked all around, inside the station and out, even to the taxi stand, but she did not find her.

Union Station began to fill up with people waiting for delayed trains. All sorts of rumors were going around. Some one had heard up at the newspaper office that there was a wreck.

Kitty asked Mr. Wilson what the trouble was, and he said quietly:

"There has been an accident of some kind. Not very serious. A collision down the line on account of the fog. Mistake in signals, I guess, and some people were hurt. They're bringing them up on a special train and ambulances are waiting at the end of the station down by the baggage room."

KITTY went out on the platform and found the seat where she and Bob had talked together two weeks ago, while the minutes dragged by. It didn't seem possible life could be so cruel as to take him from her so soon. Maybe he was just hurt, not killed. She sat imagining the worst, when newsboys began calling extras 'way up the street.

"Extra! Extra! All about the big wreck at Jackson Crossing. Twenty-four injured, two killed. Extra! Extra!"

Kitty bought a paper and stared at the big black headlines with blurred eyes, but it was only the first vague news; there was no list of the injured or dead.

Then she heard the clang of ambulances arriving outside, and Mr. Wilson told her the relief train was just pulling in.

"Expecting any one?" he asked gently, and Kitty nodded, not able to speak. She had to wait while the bridal party passed out ahead of her, laughing and calling good-by all the way down the platform, and throwing rice and rose-leaves until they were stopped by police lines as they began carrying off the injured from the relief train. Kitty saw the bride hide her face against the groom's shoulder.

The crowd stood banked in silent waiting lines as empty stretchers were passed through the windows of the train and others were borne along up to the baggage car.

The girl from Alpena watched the

blanketed forms carried by her, with tragedy in her frightened dark eyes. As each ambulance filled up, it started off, its gong sounding all the way up the crowded square.

It dawned on Kitty that even if she did see Bob carried by, they would not let her get to him, and she began to sob like the woman next to her—dry, broken sobs of helplessness.

"Why didn't I let him kiss me when he said good-by?" she thought wildly. "Why didn't I tell Bob 'of course I loved him and had come to meet him'?"

SUDDENLY she felt arms fold about her from behind, and heard his voice cheerful and ringing.

"Hello, Kitty, here you are. I'm all right."

She threw her arms around his neck tightly and sobbed on his breast. She let him kiss her now, over and over, and laughing together from sheer happiness, she hung close to his arm as they went back into the waiting room.

"Let's go uptown where we can be quiet and talk together," Bob suggested. "I know a bully place to eat, and I have good news for you. They're going to shift my territory, so we can be married at once."

Suddenly three shots rang out behind them and he fell to the marble floor at her side. It seemed as if people were almost trampling on them as Kitty knelt and held his head on her arm while Jimmy ran to get Matt.

She heard police whistles and the crowd drew back to see what was happening outside in the street where they were chasing some one.

Matt went quietly into a telephone booth while the red caps picked up Bob on a stretcher and carried him into the first aid room.

Kitty sat on the bench outside. She did not cry now, it was too terrible. She felt stilled and shocked at what had happened. Some one, she thought it was Mrs. Cummings, came by and patted her shoulder, saying they thought Bob was all right. After awhile Matt came by and she asked if he thought she could see Bob.

"Sure, you'd do him good," he said. "He's doing fine, and they're taking him up to St. Luke's. Want a ride in the ambulance with him? I'm going up."

He took her into the room where Bob lay on a leather couch, partly covered with a gray blanket. His face was white, and his head was bandaged, but he grinned up at her in the old way.

"Gee, they almost got me, didn't they?" he said. "Funny, missing the wreck, and then almost getting it like that. I had it promised to me all right."

MATT drew a chair up with one hand and sat down.

"We got three of them up at the Palace Hotel," he said casually. "What's that girl's first name, Bob, calls herself Lorraine?"

"Jackie. Did they get her, too? Gee!" Bob fell back as he tried to raise himself from the pillow. "She told me last week in Chicago that she wouldn't meet me here, but I'd be met all right!"

"Yeh? You didn't carry the black bag this time, did you?" Matt took out a notebook and a pencil.

"When I saw her in Chicago last week I told her I was through. I thought I had been just passing along a little special stuff like jewelry or something, but she laughed at me and said it was dope, and that I was in 'the ring' with the rest of them. They wouldn't let me pull out, they'd get me

first, she said, but I was through just the same, on account of Kitty here."

Bob rested a minute and Kitty laid her cheek against his hand.

"Will you kiss me now?" he whispered, and she bent her head to his lips.

Matt continued to write in his notebook until he seemed contented.

"Sign this for now. We'll get more later. It's a nice clean-up."

Kitty stood up resolutely as he rose to go.

"I'm going to be married to Bob as soon as he gets out," she said. "We're engaged."

"Well," Matt glanced at Bob, "he'll be out of the hospital in about a week, I guess. Maybe in a day or two. Better have the wedding here in the station, so we can all be in on it."

"But, I mean—isn't he—" She stopped, her eyes pleading.

"Nothing against Bob," said Matt. "He just got shot because they knew he had too much on them."

Jimmy stuck his head in the doorway.

"All ready, Matt, waiting for you."

He helped tuck the blanket around Bob as they lifted him up on the stretcher, but he didn't look at Kitty's rapt face as she followed it out of the station to the ambulance.

Memories

YOU and I once kept a tryst
Planned so slyly;
In an orchard met and kissed
Fondly, shyly.
Childish romance, so they say,
And your father moved away
That September;
But whenever apples fall
Or I hear a night bird call
I remember!

—*Rena S. Travals*

Summer Time Is Over, Lass

SUMMER time is over, lass,
And in ways that we are knowing,
Lo, a ghostly wind is blowing
Withered leaves across the grass!
Summer time is over, lass,
And the crumbling roses pass,
In a whisper they are going
Back to join the earth's dark mass.

Time of roses! Time of June!
Cold the mists, as they come creeping
From the meadows; Death is keeping
A pale trysting with the moon.
Time of roses! Time of June!
Beauty vanishes so soon!
And my heart of dreams is weeping
Where the paths are petal-strewn.

Summer time will come again,
And the roses will be waking;
Though a wailing wind is shaking
Dead leaves over hill and glen,
Summer time will come again
Like a star that walks the fen,
But my heart is breaking, breaking—
Lass, will we be lovers then?

—Edgar Daniel Kramer.

"Yes, I said 'my dear'," she told him and felt Hal's reproachful eyes

A Line for Lucine

"I see you a bridesmaid where you might be the bride—but you are too timid," the gypsy told her. So Lucine got a new line

By Carol Bird

LUCINE was furious. Four months ago Magda Jasper had carelessly tossed aside Karl Dorsett, and now she wanted him back again. Lucine, mightily attracted to Magda's "overflow," had felt sorry for him, and had since become his friend.

They had been having glorious times together, she and this tall, handsome man; dances, little supper parties at the homes of friends, and once or twice long rides out into the country in Karl's new car. Now the good times promised to end, and all because Magda—magnetic, whimsical, popular Magda—had beckoned him back to her side!

The worst of it was that Karl showed a marked willingness to respond to her summons.

"Men are weaklings," Lucine decided, pondering over the matter one

evening as she sat in Magda's room, waiting for her friend to "make up" before going to the neighborhood picture playhouse with her. "A girl jilts one of 'em, and he's willing to forgive and forget as long as the jilter is good to look at and has charm."

Lucine gazed with wistful eyes at Magda, as that Lorelei leaned close to the mirror, applying a thin red pencil of rouge to her full and petulant lips.

"She certainly is lovely," she thought, with a little catch at her heart, as she realized what a temptation Magda presented to Karl. Magda was a lush brunette, a ripe-looking creature, with lustrous black eyes, hair cut in a close, sleek bob, heavy eyebrows, deftly penciled, an olive skin which held rouge as a rose holds pollen, and an alluring mouth.

And Magda knew full well how to exercise her charms.

She was always ready to go out on a "party," forever ready to indulge in clever, easy banter with men; and she had such a seductive and languid way of melting into their arms when she danced with them.

Oh, yes, indeed, Magda was a formidable rival for any girl, particularly for a girl like Lucine.

For Lucine, though only twenty-two, clung to the traditions of an older generation. She hated all the present-day frothy insincerities exchanged between the sexes. She loathed pursuing men. She was, if the truth be told, too demure and self-effacing in an age of speed and action.

"If a man I know wants to see me he knows how he can reach me," she used to say to Magda, when that lively girl, bored temporarily, would boldly pick up the receiver and call up some boy friend, hopeful that he would issue an invitation to go to "Jazzland" or the movies or "San Toy's Chop Suey Parlor." Lucine was not priggish, and her remark had merely been an answer to Magda's inquiry as to why she did not "get busy on the telephone."

Now as Lucine studied Magda she wondered whether, after all, her technique was not the more successful. Magda always had plenty of engagements while she, Lucine, frequently sat at home amusing her younger sister by making caramels, or playing Chinese bridge with one of her brothers.

"Why are you so ready to make it up with Karl?" she asked suddenly in her forthright way. She had been mulling over Magda's desire to reannex Karl to her retinue of admirers, and felt that the easiest way to an explanation was simply to ask.

Magda started slightly at the question.

"Why?" she repeated, answering one question with another. "Oh—I don't know. Karl is a nice boy, isn't he? Rather amusing, in fact. I like him. I've always liked him."

Lucine shrugged impatiently.

"Oh, Magda, do be honest. Not so long ago you said you were bored by him. You thought him too studious. You said he talked about his business future too often to be entertaining, and that you grew weary of his continuous harping on the subject. You were so tired of him that you didn't even like the way he combed his hair, and you razzed him terribly when he sent you arbutus that time. You accused him of sentimentality. It seems so strange that now—now, just when —just as—"

"Just as you have about decided he is your property? That little Magda should step in and recapture him, eh, darling?"

Magda laughed derisively, and Lu-

cine had to down an impulse to slap her.

"Don't forget that I had prior rights," reminded Magda. "Karl has been a cavalier of mine for ages. I wanted a little vacation from him, that's all. Now I find him useful as an escort to several coming affairs. And his new car will prove handy driving me out in the country week-ends this summer. It's always so hot and stuffy in town, and most every one is away on vacations. How can one get to the beaches or out for a breath of fresh air minus a man with a car?"

"So that's it—the new car," thought Lucine, bolstered up considerably. "Perhaps, after all, Magda just cares for Karl because he can be useful to her. In that case, there is still hope for me."

"But you have loads of beaux with cars, Magda," she reminded the other. "And Karl's car is such an ordinary one."

Magda eyed her keenly, as she doused herself with a heavy French perfume that smelled like tuberoses.

"Well, cheer up, precious. In that case, you won't even want to ride with us on the rumble seat, will you?"

All the way to the motion picture house Lucine was silent, puzzled over the eternal game between men and women. Why was it that so often men, genuinely smart men, were blind to the selfishness of certain girls?

When Magda and Lucine were half a block away from the Door of Dreams motion picture cathedral, some one called out to them:

"Magda! Lucine! Oh, there, Magda!"

They turned around, and saw Karl Dorsett parked at the curb in his new tan sports car, with its tiny border of brown to set it off. Walking back, they stopped and talked with him.

"It's too fine a night to spend inside a motion picture house," Karl said, when he learned their destination. "Let's go for a ride, and then wind up at Jazzland for a few dances. I can't stay late, because I've got to do some home-work."

Magda turned to Lucine.

"Can you stand being a rumbler?" she asked, indifferently. Lucine sensed that Magda would much rather have met Karl when she was alone.

"Perhaps," she said, tentatively, "perhaps I'd better run along home. Harvey wants me to help with—"

"Oh, bother Harvey," interrupted Karl. "Climb in. No, here in front. There's plenty of room for three if we sit packed sort of sardine-wise."

Lucine climbed in, but chose the rumble seat, feeling like an acrobat as she poised, on stilt-like heels, on the step, before plunging into the awkward little compartment.

The top of the car was down, so she could hear the conversation of the two who sat ahead.

"You're a darling to stop for us," she heard Magda say in that hearty, enthusiastic way of hers. Darling. Darling. Darling. Magda tossed the endearing word about like a tennis ball. It meant nothing whatever to her. She used it in addressing her girl friends, her boy friends, her mother, father, the cook, and her chow dog "Mignonette."

As she chattered, her bright-red silk scarf fluttered behind like a flaming pennant of victory.

Lucine wished that she had taken more pains with her own dress tonight. She wore her old liberty-blue frock, so tailored and so dull in color. Magda, as usual, was prepared for any

emergency. She wore a smart gray silk frock, and red beads, and her stunning gray and red sports coat. Her parents were indulgent, and the money Magda earned in a law office was simply a little luxury fund, providing her with expensive perfumes, and $5.00 a pair sheer silk hose.

"I'm taking a night course at the university, you know," Karl was saying now. "I go three nights a week. Finance and banking. I think—"

"Ugh! Sounds like a heavy grind." Magda yawned, then swiftly changed the subject:

"Have you been invited to Francine's party next week-end, out at her married sister's home in Rye? You have! Good boy! Then perhaps you won't mind driving me out, my little lamb."

Lucine bit her lip. What a fast worker Magda was! And how ruthlessly she trampled over every one else. Didn't she realize that she—Lucine—would have liked Karl to drive her out too? Hadn't she even mentioned to Magda that she thought he planned to? And how rude of Magda to interrupt Karl just when he was starting to tell about his present big new interest.

Her glance settled on the back of Karl's head, a well-shaped head, and turned just enough so that she caught a glimpse of his firm jaw and his determined profile.

"He's not spineless," she thought, puzzled. "He looks like a forceful, purposeful man. I'm sure he'll make good in his chosen work. And yet—and yet—how pliable he is in the hands of a little man-hunter like Magda."

Jazzland was as gay as ever, and Lucine's drooping spirits soared when she heard the blaring, syncopated music. But all through the evening they kept fluctuating, falling like the mercury in a thermometer, every time Karl gave evidence that Magda held a firm place in his affections; and rising whenever the slim comfort of his occasional request for a dance came her way.

Once, while sitting out a dance—the third in succession she had wallflowered away while Karl whirled Magda about in his arms—Lucine stared, magnetized, at the dark, lithesome girl who was causing her so much distress and anxiety.

Magda was looking up into Karl's face with such practiced coquetry that Lucine marveled that the man she had learned to care for so deeply did not recognize it. Instead he was staring down into Magda's dark eyes with a charmed expression. "Just like a bird and a snake," thought Lucine angrily, though she had never witnessed such a magnetic performance.

As Magda danced, Lucine noted that her body seemed to melt into her partner's, so that their steps were liquid. Never a misstep. Never a gauche gesture. Magda seemed to have a genius for looking graceful and well poised no matter where she was, no matter what she was doing.

There! Even now, when that awkward stout girl with the short partner collided with her, Magda managed to side-step them with agility.

"I'll never tell his name," Magda teased, as they walked back to join Lucine after the dance. Then, addressing Lucine: "Karl wants to know who's going to take me to the Merry Strollers's dance two weeks from tonight. But I'm keeping him guessing. He's worried."

Jealous! Karl jealous of Magda! Ah, then, there was no longer hope for her. A jealous man was a lovesick man.

"Do you think she ought to be so secretive?" Karl asked, his brow furrowed a slight frown. "Don't you think she ought to confide in two old friends like us?"

Magda laughed, and her mirth was so infectious that several couples at adjoining tables joined in her laughter. One of the boys eyed Magda admiringly, even though he sat beside a stunning red-headed girl.

"My dearest Karl," Magda jibed. "You're altogether too inquisitive. But here's a bargain. If you tell me who you're going to take to the Carnation Carnival next week, I'll tell you who's going to take me to the Strollers' dance. Fair enough?"

Lucine blushed. Unwittingly she had confided in Magda sometime ago that Karl had hinted that he might take her. That was before Magda had decided to put him back in her own good graces. Now she scarcely dared look at Karl while she waited breathlessly for his answer.

"Come now, tell Mama," teased Magda. "Who is my great big banker-boy going to take to the Carnival?" She reached out and began toying with Karl's hand, bending his fingers back playfully, and counting the white "sweetheart-spots" on his finger nails. And just as playfully Karl slapped at her shapely hands as he said:

"I'm going to take Magda Jasper, of course. Who else?"

And as Magda shot her a significant glance, Lucine tried to appear unconcerned, interested in what was going on at an adjoining table.

THAT night, long after the rest of the family was asleep, Lucine tossed feverishly in her bed. She could not endure the thought of losing Karl to Magda, and yet that was precisely what was happening. How to bind him to her? For, apparently, she held him by a very slender thread, considering the fact that he was so willing to be tugged back to the capricious Magda's side.

And yet, during those four months that she had enjoyed Karl's companionship, he had seemed to be attracted to her. What, then, was wrong? Karl Dorsett was not a philandering type of man. Still he seemed to be again at Magda's beck and call, even after an interval of almost half a year, during which he knew the dashing Magda had been busy with other beaux. Was he in love with her, after all? And if so, wasn't it futile to try and hold him?

Or did the fault, after all, lie with herself?

"People," thought Lucine, "are too prone to blame the other fellow for all their unhappiness, instead of searching within themselves for some shortcoming." What was hers? A lack of good looks?

Nimbly she hopped out of bed and switched on the light. She stared at herself in the mirror for a long time. When she switched off the light and climbed back into bed she was smiling a little.

No, decidedly, hers was not the sort of face to send a man scurrying in the opposite direction. Small, oval, with a creamy-white skin. Nice features, piquant features. Really fine eyes, large, expressive, and a deep blue, veiled by dark lashes. And nice brown hair, which had just grown from the bob stage to a glossy small knob at the back of her neck.

Was it her personality? Lucine couldn't sleep until she had finished her stock-taking. No. It couldn't be that, for she made and held many friends.

Not very many men friends, it was true. Perhaps—perhaps she was a trifle too old-fashioned, too conventional, too shy? All around her other girls called up men, made advances, jollied them. And the system seemed to work.

Molla Springer had once told her:

"Be more aggressive! These days girls take the initiative. No longer do we females sit back patiently and wait until men seek us out. We do a little seeking on our own. Why not? A modest violet gets nowhere these days when the big bold poppy flourishes along the highways."

Was Molla right? Certainly she appeared to be, considering Magda's case. For Magda was certainly a poppy, and she did have a far better time than other girls, less bold and defiant of conventions.

Eventually Lucine fell asleep, but not before she had made a resolution. It was this: she would borrow Magda's technique and see what happened! And, what was more, she would put it into effect at once—and with Karl. She couldn't lose Karl. They were too harmonious. They had too many common interests: love of outdoors, love of books, love of home-life, a fondness for acquiring knowledge. She'd just—

And then she drifted into a land of fantasy, where all the odds were with her instead of against her. Where Karl spurned a girl resembling Magda, and with a gesture of delight turned to herself, dressed in a red tulle frock, like a carnival costume or that of a bareback rider.

THE following night Lucine, after a rather trying day at the office, sat down to read, occasionally eying the telephone with hopeful glances. It was silent as a tomb. Suddenly she jumped up, walked over to it, took down the receiver and called a number.

"Hello. I'd like to speak to Mr. Dorsett, please. Hello, Karl? This is Lucine. Yes—I said Lucine. How are you? I hope you're not deep in study to-night. Why? Oh, because I'd like to see you, my dear. Yes, I said 'my dear.' Dad and mother are out, and I'm forlorn. A little orphan. Come over and hold my hand and keep me company. I'll fix you a rarebit if you're a good, entertaining boy. Yes, my lamb, yes, Karl, I said—"

"Lucine!"

Lucine looked up to see the shocked eyes of her sixteen-year-old brother Hal leveled at her. Hastily she finished her conversation, after hearing Karl say he would take a run over.

"Lucine, how flip!" exclaimed her brother, reproachfully. "I never heard you jolly a chap like that before. You're getting as bad as all these brazen 1929 man-eating flappers. And you're old enough to know better!"

Lucine felt her cheeks burn, but she retorted:

"Never mind, Hal, when you get a few years older some man-eater will gobble you up!"

"A fine chance! I hate that type of girl. All men do."

"In theory, yes. But they marry 'em, just the same!"

Karl arrived an hour later, and he and Lucine went out for a drive. Karl was less talkative than usual, and Lucine wondered fearfully if he were disgusted with her tactics. But she clung to Magda's methods.

"Whatever ails you, Karl, old dear? Are you in love or just out of it? I never saw you like this before."

Karl hesitated before answering:

"Just tired, I guess. I've been studying too late nights."

Instantly Lucine forgot her technique, and asked him about his new course. She was delighted to see him so ambitious. Already she could visualize him seated at a mahogany desk, ordering a staff of efficient office help, obsequious clerks and polite stenographers—men stenographers.

Karl seemed to shed his weariness as he told her enthusiastically about his studies, his plans and his hopes for the future.

Later, at home, before stirring up a rarebit, Lucine donned a vivid green rubber bridge apron, all splashed with hearts and clubs and spades, a decorative patch which would not protect her dress. Ordinarily she would have put on one of her plain flowered chintz aprons, but she knew that Magda would have arranged to look attractive even while bending over a stove. So she did likewise. And she blarneyed and kidded and joshed all during the time that Karl ate the savory mess.

Did her persiflage weary him? Or was it only her imagination? At any rate, shortly after the little supper he left, pleading much work the following day as an excuse for wanting to retire early.

TWO days later Lucine did a bit more stalking by telephone. This time she called up Dr. Will Merkins, a rather dull, humorless acquaintance of high school days, and hinted adroitly that she'd like to go to the Carnation Carnival. She had heard Magda ferret out an invitation in this fashion too many times not to be rather clever at it herself.

And the invitation was forthcoming.

Lucine did not see Karl again until

the night of the Carnival, when they almost collided outside the gypsy fortune teller's booth.

Magda was as blooming as ever in a vivid green frock and small green hat, wearing two real gardenias fastened to her red fox neckpiece. She looked at the lumpish Will rather scornfully, and said:

"We've just had our fortunes told. And guess what the gypsy told me? The wedding bells are going to ring for little Magda very soon. In seven weeks, to be exact. And the lucky bridegroom is going to be a professional man. The gypsy said he was not far off this very evening."

Magda eyed Karl with mischievous eyes, and Lucine could not refrain from saying daringly:

"Perhaps it's Will here. He's a professional man. A physician."

Karl laughed, and Will looked annoyed, while Magda pretended that she hadn't heard. Waving airily, she tugged at Karl's arm, and they were soon lost in the crowd.

Inside the tent Lucine held forth a shaking palm. Seven weeks! Seven weeks! Ah, was there anything in a gypsy's forecasts?

The gypsy, in a gay costume jingling with little coins, red paper carnations in her black hair, stared into Lucine's palm:

"You are to be a bridesmaid at a wedding very soon. You could have won the man yourself—the bridegroom I mean—but for the fact that you are too vacillating. Too hesitant. You lack force. Thus the wedding march plays for the other girl. Remember what Goethe says in '*Faust*': 'Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. I say the prize goes to the bold.'"

Almost ready to weep, and angered by the silly superstition, Lucine crossed the gypsy's palm with silver. While she waited for Will's palm to be read, she heard not a word of what the gypsy told him. Her brain no longer seemed to function. She was drenched in woe.

To make matters worse, and to help prove the gypsy's prognostications, she had no word from Karl in the ensuing days. But Will Merkins began rushing her. He called her up almost every day, both at home and at her office. Once a week he sent her flowers, quite an unusual courtesy, she thought, in these modern days. But his attentions did not thrill Lucine.

For Will was not the sort of cavalier who thrilled. And yet he had nice manners, was wealthy, and came of an excellent family. Lucine was surprised to learn that his father was head of a big down town financial institution, and that he had offered Karl a position with his firm as soon as he finished his course. She wondered why Will hadn't studied finance instead of medicine.

It was sheer inspiration that gave Lucine her big idea a week later. To bring Will and Magda together! She got the idea one evening when Will drove up in his expensive foreign car, a recent gift from his indulgent father.

"Magda likes fine cars, the things money can buy. She doesn't know about Will. I'll see that she acquires some of the details."

So Lucine gave a party. A slick little foursome at her home—and she invited Magda, Karl and Will. They played cards, danced to Will's expensive portable victrola records, took a drive in Will's expensive foreign car, came back and ate delicious crab-flake patties Lucine's mother had made for the party.

And as they ate, Lucine mentioned casually that Will's father was soon

to be Karl's boss. Instantly Lucine saw a marked change in Magda's manner!

All evening she had observed, with satisfaction, Magda's overtures to Will, dating from the time they had stepped into his car. But now Magda almost caressed him with her glances.

Lucine understood.

Magda was not the type of girl who would try to capture a mere employee when she could secure a rich employer's son. Just the relative positions of these young men had the tendency to regulate the shallow Magda's affections. Lucine was positive that from then on Will would be the target of her baiting, and not Karl!

But late that night when Magda was putting on her wraps in Lucine's room, Lucine realized she was mistaken. She asked casually:

"How do you like Will, Magda?"

And Magda yawned and said in a disinterested voice:

"Oh, he's all right. Very nice. But quiet, don't you think?"

Later, as she helped her mother clear away the wreckage of the party, Lucine planned further steps in her campaign. She would have to work fast to accomplish anything in seven weeks! Seven weeks! Why already several of them were past. Then she suddenly felt abashed at her silly confidence in a gypsy's palm-reading.

"Do you believe in gypsy fortunes, mother?"

Mrs. Malcolm, an unimaginative, sensible woman, looked surprised.

"Fortune telling? Why, how absurd, Lucine! No one can look into the future. Fortune telling is simply entertainment for the ignorant."

Lucine felt as though she had been spanked.

One week later Lucine learned that future man-stalking on her part was unnecessary.

The campaign had ended!

Almost before it had started. The champion stalker of the two had won out.

Magda telephoned her big news:

"I'm married, Lucine darling! We eloped yesterday. Drove to Maryland. Now we're home to break the news to dad. Then we're going to Bermuda for a honeymoon. Isn't it wonderful? Do you wish us happiness?"

While the world rocked, Lucine murmured:

"Of course, yes. Much happiness, Magda. You're sure to have it with Karl." She could scarcely utter the beloved name.

"Karl! Are you crazy! D'ye picture me marrying a mere student! I am Mrs. William Merkin."

Now the world grew a little steadier, while Lucine, feverish with happiness, managed to gasp:

"Will! Why, you scarcely know Will! You met him for the first time at the Carnation Carnival."

"Of course, silly! But little Magda is a fast worker. And Will isn't so slow himself. He appears so on the surface, but actually he's as modern as you make 'em. He proposed to me two nights after that party at your house. Of course, I prodded him a little. You know Magda's not slow. And now I must run along, darling. Better pep up yourself, my child, or you'll end up in a Home for Indigent Spinsters. Speed, my dear! We live in a fast age. You'll never get anywhere poking along in that modest violet way of yours."

Lucine laughed hysterically as she hung up the receiver.

Well, this was one time when the modest violet had accomplished some-

thing. Her campaign had been successful!

A half hour later, while Lucine still sat in a trance of joy, trying to digest Magda's news, the telephone bell rang again. This time it was Karl:

"Want to be a bridesmaid?" he asked. Then, learning that Lucine had already heard of the elopement, he said:

"Magda's dad is furious at a secret wedding. So she and Will are going to be married all over again at a formal ceremony. She has asked you and me to be bridesmaid and best man. How about it? I'll be over this evening to talk about it with you."

Seven weeks! The gypsy's prophecy had come true, only a little ahead of time. Magda was a bride, true enough. And she, Lucine, was to be a bridesmaid!

Driving out toward White Plains that evening, Lucine told Karl about the gypsy's fortune. He laughed.

"Oh, I know all about it. My sister Edna was the gypsy."

"Your sister! But how did she know—"

"Well, the truth is, she was egging you on. She doesn't like Magda, and though she has only seen you once or twice before at parties and never to speak to, she did think you were—well—rather nice. But she is a good judge of people, and she thought you were a bit too shy—and that you needed a little jolt. So she gave it to you.

"As for her telling Magda that she was soon to be married to a professional man, she did that just for fun. She wanted to see her reaction. Edna had told me that Magda was stalking me, and I ridiculed the idea. She wanted me to see Magda's reaction to her prophecy. She needn't have wasted her efforts. I've never been a victim of Magda's obvious technique. I like her, because she has spirit and vivacity, but she's not the sort of girl I could ever love."

Lucine was silent. Then she said:

"Did *you* think me—slow?"

Again Karl laughed.

"Well, Lucine dear, dear Lucine" (he managed, even though driving, to cover one of her hands with his), "I did think—at first—that you were a trifle timid. Too inclined to step aside for some one else. I thought you didn't exactly keep pace with modern times. Men, you know, usually like a vivacious, spirited girl, not as vivacious as Magda, but a sort of mid-way type. I never dreamed you were anything but quiet and reserved until—"

"Until?"

"You telephoned me, and—"

"Carried on the rest of my campaign. That was all a deep-laid plot, Karl. I was borrowing Magda's methods. After all, I *am* slow. I *loathe* stalking men. I—"

Karl stopped the car, leaned over, and swiftly kissed her.

"You won't have to do any more stalking, dearest. You've cornered your prey. I'm crazy about you! Will you marry me after we get through with this business of being attendants for Magda and Will?"

Lucine, feeling that she must still be in a dream, and that at any moment she would wake up into a gray world, murmured "Yes," as she drew as close as she could to the driver.

Mariel sat up weakly and looked around

Wooing Wings

Menacing wings vanish forever as the wings of love enfold Mariel

By Clelia S. Mount

THE STORY SO FAR

MARIEL DEVOE, who has always lived a care-free, jazzy existence at Six Trees, an estate in Westchester, finds herself surrounded by mystery.

Raoul Fernier, a famous French aviator who is incognito, asks her to marry him. Then Marshall Devoe, the man she has always known as "daddy," informs the girl that she is only his foster child, but refuses to tell the name of her real parents.

After Devoe has received several mysterious "gray letters," he takes Mariel and Betty, her younger sister, on a secret trip aboard his yacht, the *Black Star*. Their destination proves to be Long Lake, Devoe's lumber and pulp mill camp in northern Maine.

There Mariel first hears of a baffling air raider known as the Black Star. She meets and falls in love with Lance Thayer, a young aviator flying in the vicinity for the Forest Air Patrol.

Shortly afterward Marshall Devoe leaves for Canada. Mariel has reason to believe the menace that drove them from Six Trees and the Black Star are the one and same.

A threatening "gray letter" arrives. Then Betty confesses she told Raoul Fernier their whereabouts. Fernier makes an appearance and again asks Mariel to marry him, but she is not yet sure whether her feeling for him is love or only infatuation.

Later, upon returning to their camp, Mariel finds Betty is missing and their Indian guard wounded and unconscious. Young Thayer is away searching for the Black Star, so when Raoul Fernier arrives again at Long Lake and offers assistance in the search for Betty,

Mariel gladly accepts it. She and Fernier fly off in his plane.

CHAPTER IX

A SULLEN dawn crept across the eastern sky in back of them. Suddenly Mariel realized the night was over. The promise of the silver moonlight had been false. The new day seemed destined to be born in gray clouds and rain.

Below them, two thousand feet or more, the Loup chain of lakes and the wild forests were shrouded in a mist that was like opaque smoke. Mariel stirred wearily. She looked at Raoul Fernier beside her, wondering if he felt the same inertia she knew.

It all seemed so hopeless, so futile.

Betty gone! Joe Fourfeathers, their Indian guide, lying wounded in the shanty on the island. Lance Thayer away on a mission for the Forest Air Patrol—Lance, who carried her heart with him.

Raoul Fernier and herself searching the illimitable spaces of the sky for a sign of Betty's abductor.

The rain increased as they flew. Mariel noticed how anxiously Fernier thrust his head forward to consult the dials on the instrument board. Once or twice he glanced at a flat chart near the control stick and changed their course. Then, when the morning was well advanced, Mariel had a feeling that they were lost.

She looked uneasily at Fernier. Doubts assailed her. Was it wise, after all, to have enlisted his aid?

The roar of the gray plane's motor prevented converse. By this time Lance must be back at patrol headquarters. The thing to do was to wing a swift way to Long Lake and find Lance, who, Mariel's heart told her, would discover Betty.

Attracting Fernier's attention, she made gestures eloquent of her desire to turn about and go back. Whether Fernier understood or not, she didn't know. He smiled and shook his head.

She touched his shoulder impulsively and pointed eastward, whereupon Fernier indicated the fuel gauge. Mariel, straining forward, saw that their gas supply had diminished considerably.

That was all the more reason for their return. Alarmed, she placed her lips as close as possible to Fernier's helmet and tried to make herself heard above the throbbing hum of the motor.

"Go back, Raoul! We must turn back!"

SUDDENLY there came a break, a discord in the motor's silken song. The engine skipped a beat and sputtered. It caught again, ran evenly for a space, then started to miss badly.

The French aviator was trying to coax the motor on. He manipulated a small lever vigorously.

When Mariel looked again at the fuel gauge it registered almost zero!

The next minute the roar of the engine ceased entirely, and her heart seemed to stop with it.

She had the unpleasant, eerie sensation of falling headlong into space. Yet she knew they were not actually plunging to their doom. Fernier, with expert skill, had dropped the nose of the gray machine into a long, sweeping glide. The wind whistled past them. The mist closed in more completely. Through it, Mariel's frightened eyes detected the glimmer of water beneath them.

"Gas gone!" Fernier was shouting. "Don't be alarmed! We'll make safe landing!"

She tried to be brave, to think of

Betty and to remember Lance's kisses and his arms about her.

With express speed they shot downward. Fernier, working the controls in mad haste, checked their drop to level off and speed along straight until they began to drop again.

The lake they were over was not at any great distance below. The plane was a hydro, built for just such landings. But there was the foggy mist to obscure the view, and their rushing, headlong speed to reckon with.

Breath trapped in her throat and her hands clutched nervelessly over her racing heart, Mariel sensed that, in spite of all Fernier had done, the worst of the descent was still before them.

Out from the shore of the lake jutted a wooded peninsula. There were rocks everywhere, stark, ominous rocks, and to the right the open water was marred by sedge grass and a swamp.

Mariel shut her eyes.

The gray hydroplane struck the water with a tremendous impact. For one dizzy, tempestuous second Mariel imagined they were destined to be safe, after all. So precipitous was their downward plunge that they skimmed across yards of water, to collide with the wooded arm of the peninsula.

There was a dull crash and Mariel was wrested violently from the cockpit seat as the plane careened over and came to a stop, one crumpled wing tilted at a hazardous angle.

The world went black.

SHE opened her eyes to find that Fernier had carried her to the tip of the peninsula. Under the shelter of a spruce tree, Mariel sat up weakly and looked around. The tangled wreckage of the plane made her realize how miraculously she had escaped.

Her gaze sought the French aviator. Raoul Fernier was pale and shaken, but uninjured. He caught her hands quickly, relief like a fire in his black eyes.

"Thank God! I thought it must be the end! This cursed fog. Without it there would have been no difficulty. We could have landed easily, safely. And now—"

He gestured in the direction of the plane. Mariel felt for broken bones with exploring fingers. Save for an ache in her temples and a soreness in one rounded arm she was evidently none the worse for the mishap.

Anxiously, she peered at the streamers of fog, listening to the rhythmical downpour of the rain with a sad and heavy heart. To find Betty now was out of the question. She had her own salvation to consider.

They were miles from Long Lake—lost in the encompassing and desolate forest!

"What are we to do, Raoul?"

Fernier, who had lapsed into silent introspection, roused himself. He turned to her with a shrug. Color had crept back into his dark, aquiline face. Some of his old jaunty grace squared his shoulders.

"There is nothing to do except wait for the mist to rise and the sun to shine. There is no particular cause for worry, *chérie*. Your precious Air Patrol has men flying this territory. When it clears we will be observed and rescued."

"How do you know so much about the Forest Air Patrol, Raoul?"

"I have heard of its efficiency." He seemed to smile sardonically. "Betty mentioned it to me. She said there was one aviator in particular—a Monsieur Thayer, I believe—who is highly clever. Possibly this Thayer, when he

learns you are missing, will come flying by in search of you."

Was he jesting? Mariel pursed her red lips. There was an underlying note of irony in Fernier's tone that she had never before heard. It piqued and perplexed her.

"What are we to eat?" Mariel asked in a small voice.

"What can we eat? Until we are found by the magnificent Thayer we shall have to endure a few discomforts. Hunger, I fear, will be one of them."

"WHY do you speak of Lance Thayer?" Mariel cried softly. "You do not even know him."

"I have heard of him."

"Who told you about him?"

Fernier leaned a little forward.

"Betty! She thinks you are in love with this young aviator!"

Mariel kept her gaze steady upon his. Deep within her she felt a premonition of impending disaster.

"So you see," Fernier went on, "I have the identity of my rival at last. You, upon whom I have lavished my love—no wonder you scorn me. Why did you not play fair? Why did you not tell me you were in love with this Thayer?"

"There was another reason why I could not answer you, Raoul."

"And that?"

"I am not Marshall Devoe's real daughter. I am only," she said bitterly, "a foster child!"

The French aviator's expression changed to one of bewilderment.

"You surely don't expect me to believe that?"

"It is the truth! My father told me the night of the dance at Six Trees."

"Ha! So it was Devoe who told you?" Fernier's eyes narrowed. "My dear Mariel, suppose Marshall Devoe had a reason for telling you a falsehood? Suppose, for example, he told you that thinking it would check you in answering me when I asked you to marry me?"

Mariel parted her lips, regarding him blankly.

"But why would my father tell me that to prevent my marrying you?"

"Your American captain of industry," Fernier pointed out slowly, "is always suspicious of his daughter's suitors. Perhaps with good reason. The daughter is an heiress and the suitor usually an impoverished fortune hunter. Is that not so?"

"We'll grant it," Mariel said. "Please go on."

"Your father," Fernier continued, "looked upon me in that light. Why should he not? I am merely a French aviator. It was proper for him to view me with suspicion. He knew I was in love with you. So much for that. I understand the modern American girl. Let her parents object strongly or interfere with her romance and what happens?"

"What?"

"She goes ahead and does as she pleases. She is expert in the art of disobedience. It is like your prohibition. Deny some one something and they will have it at any cost."

TO Mariel there was plausibility in what Fernier was saying. It was not hard to remember her father's dislike. Devoe had never openly expressed it, but Mariel had sensed it from the first.

"You really think dad told me that to keep me from marrying you, Raoul?"

"Consider carefully. There are two significant sides to it. I would quickly

lose interest in you as a foster child and not a real daughter if I did happen to be a fortune hunter. And you—the chances are that you would not care to tell me the secret. You would put me off, just as you have done."

A thrill swept through Mariel. If only it were true! Suppose her father had told her what he did merely to protect her!

It meant so many wonderful things. Principally, it meant that she might answer Lance Thayer with the gift of her love.

The exultation lingered while Raoul Fernier added a few more comments. Then he turned to peer at the fog.

The rain had ceased, but the lake mist was still rising like smoke. Mariel's tingling happiness dwindled. She was so isolated, so alone and there was so much to be done. It was maddening to think this disaster prevented her from seeking and finding Betty.

Over her shoulder Mariel saw him coming

"It has stopped raining," Fernier remarked. "I have just remembered there are some provisions in the plane. Presently we will salvage them. Meanwhile, let us look for dry wood. I have matches."

"That's a good idea," Mariel agreed, jumping up.

She went one way and Fernier the other. The underbrush and foliage on the peninsula was so dense it was not difficult to find the dead branches of trees sheltered under rotting leaves. Mariel gathered an armful and retraced her steps to the shore.

Fernier had already started a blaze, which was burning briskly.

Mariel pulled off her red sweater and held it to dry. The man lighted a cigarette. Then he dropped down beside her, stretched out his booted legs to the blaze and regarded her with a whimsical smile.

"So you love the young aviator of the patrol?" Mariel continued silent, and he sighed. "Even now I cannot give up all hope. I knew you first. I loved you first. I will always love you!"

Lifting her gaze, Mariel turned to him.

"You say you love me, and yet you have asked Betty to marry you!"

"I did. That does not alter my devotion for you. I am the type of man who must have affection. Refused by you, I turn to her. You see?"

"BETTY," Mariel said decidedly, "will never marry you. I know her too well. More than once she has been violently infatuated with some one. She is only a child—"

"She *will* marry me!" Fernier interrupted pleasantly. "What a situation! Always your picture shall be in my heart, even after I am married to your sister. Your father schemed to keep you from me, but his younger daughter, whom he did not even consider, becomes my wife!"

"Would you marry Betty, not loving her?" Mariel cried incredulously.

"Why not? I can love no one but you. I will make her happy and it will dull the edge of my sorrow."

Mariel's heart cried out. Betty—the dark-haired girl who had been snatched by the hand of mystery and whisked away into the unknown!

"We must find her, Raoul."

"We shall!" he vowed. "Once this infernal fog lifts and we are rescued we can resume the hunt. I will find her for you, Mariel. Because you ask it. I will take you to her!"

"Let's salvage those provisions," Mariel suggested.

In single file they edged out to the tip of the peninsula. The submerged wing of the plane was evidently held firmly by some rocks below the surface of the water. There seemed to be little chance of the machine disappearing once it was boarded. Fernier, however, considered that phase of it carefully.

"I think it is best you climb up and enter the cockpit, Mariel. I will stand by to assist out here. Your weight is lighter than my own, and should the plane begin to slip I will hold it."

He supplied directions and a minute later Mariel was climbing up over the fuselage. Tennis, golf and summer swimming had kept her lithe and athletic. It was no difficult feat for her successfully to wriggle across the tilted wing and drop lightly down into the cockpit.

The provisions were in the locker where Fernier said they would be. Mariel found a tin of canned fish, a thermos bottle and a square box of biscuits. She lowered them over the side, and was about to return herself when something caught her attention.

A black leather wallet lay on the floor of the cockpit near the controls. The Frenchman's wallet, which had probably been jounced out of his pocket at the time of their landing. It lay open, and as Mariel picked it up a newspaper clipping fluttered out. She

caught a glimpse of a photograph and a printed name.

"Mariel! Are you coming?"

Hardly knowing why, Mariel shut the wallet, slipped it into her flannel blouse and answered Fernier:

"Are you sure that's all, Raoul?"

CHAPTER X

THE panther dusk of the autumnal season followed rapidly on the heels of twilight. A freshening breeze routed the mist late in the afternoon, and until darkness came Mariel divided her time between gathering fresh wood for the fire and scanning the blue sky for a rescuing plane.

None came and night arrived with its usual sharp cold. They sat close to the fire's warmth. They had dined well, if not royally, on what had been salvaged from the cracked-up plane.

Mariel, silent and thoughtful, listened absently to the French aviator's conversation. She did not trouble to do more than nod in answer to some question.

Her mind seemed to have separated in two sections. One part of it was filled with anticipated happiness. Lance would find Betty and Lance would have her own answer! The other half was not so optimistic.

She had only Fernier's own opinion to base her hopes upon. After all, his story of why Devoe had told her she was his foster daughter might have nothing substantial back of it. And how was Lance to find Betty in this trackless, brooding forest? How, for that matter, would any one find Mariel and her companion?

"You are silent, *chérie*."

Fernier had moved from his side of the fire to hers. He dropped down beside her, his dark, lean face painted with the glow of the dancing flames. In his eyes was the same glinting expression Mariel had seen on the night of the lantern dance at Six Trees.

"You are worried?" he continued. "That is foolish. Better make the best of a bad bargain. Worry will not help us."

"Why didn't you turn back when you saw the fuel was getting low?"

"I was heading for a place where I could replenish the tanks. It is not any great distance from here by air. Over the mountains yonder and into a valley."

Mariel looked at the walls of darkness hedging them in. The feel of the wallet in her blouse was a constant reminder of the newspaper clipping she had barely glimpsed. Speculations and questions reared up in her mind.

The touch of Fernier's hand on her arm awoke her from her musing.

"Do you remember the last time we were alone together? Your lips were cold then. They were so sweet, Mariel. Why don't you forget Thayer? A mere boy. What can he give you that I cannot equal?"

"Love!" Mariel replied.

"Love? I give you the devotion of a man who knows the world, who has seen life, who has tasted it. I can take you out into that world. Consider well before it is too late."

"I have considered. I love Lance!"

SHE expected reproaches and pleading. To her surprise, Fernier flung the remnants of a cigarette into the blaze and moved his shoulders almost casually. She had come to know him as a man of unexpected moods. He was emotional when she looked for calmness and calm when she was sure he would be emotional. He, himself, was an enigma she could not solve.

"We will heap the fire high and sleep," Fernier stated. "There is no chance of rescue until morning. This spot is at the very end of the chain of lakes, a great many miles from your father's camp. There is nothing we can do and rest is necessary after the strain of the day. Good night and," he added, "pleasant dreams."

He flung himself down on the opposite side of the roaring fire. For Mariel slumber was impossible. Her mind swarmed with errant fancies. Dread, hope, despair and expectancy stalked the corridors of her mind. She lay stretched out on the ground warmed by the fire and closed her eyes.

The blaze sank lower. Mariel sat up and looked across at Raoul Fernier, his head pillowed on his arm. Warily, she delved a hand into her blouse and produced the wallet she had found in the plane. The newspaper clipping, carefully folded, was in one pocket. She drew it out with infinite caution, held it to the flickering light and leaned forward to read it.

The picture that had first caught and arrested her attention was that of the man who slept not a dozen feet away. In the photograph he wore a pointed mustache, but the likeness was not to be doubted. Mariel's gaze leaped again to the headlines and something cold penetrated her.

With wide eyes she read:

CONVICT ESCAPES!

Bogus War Ace Flees Canadian Prison
Mechanic Formerly Employed by
Raoul Fernier Scales Wall
at Sainte Pierre

THE clipping was from a year-old Canadian newspaper. Tensely Mariel read on.

It stated that Jacques Belois, a French adventurer, who, at one time, had been Fernier's mechanic, had impersonated the famous aviator. In several Canadian cities Belois had left bad checks for large sums of money. Arrested at Ottawa, the man had stood trial and been sentenced to five years in Sainte Pierre jail, from which he had just escaped.

The account ended with a statement that all flying fields and airports were being watched and that the convict's recapture was expected momentarily.

What made Mariel's breath come faster was the picture. For under it were the words *Jacques Belois!* Like one in a trance, she kept her fascinated gaze on the man on the other side of the fire.

Presently his voice aroused her.

"So! I see you have found my wallet. And you are reading—"

In a flash Mariel was on her feet. She faced him as he crossed to her, his gaze sword-sharp and questioning.

"You—you are not Raoul Fernier!"

He bowed.

"You see, fathers are sometimes correct. No, I am not Fernier. He is in Africa. I am Jacques Belois, at your service."

His ready admission was disconcerting. Mariel regarded him with parted lips. She had been so certain he was what he claimed to be.

"Jacques Belois!" she repeated, not knowing what to say.

He laughed.

"You must give me credit for cleverness. It is almost a year since that night I went over the wall. *Mam'selle,* I am an adventurer. Life to me is a gamble. But that alters nothing of the fact that I love you!"

Mariel heard her own voice answering him.

"Do you suppose I could ever love a criminal? A man who impersonated

another? How dare you even think of it!"

HE took the wallet, slipped it into his coat pocket and dropped the clipping on the dying fire.

"I dare all for love! You hear that? Belois, the reckless adventurer and criminal, tells you that—*you*, the sheltered, highly protected daughter of wealth! Now that you know there need be no further deception between us. Once more I shall hold you within my arms and this time your lips will flame to mine!"

Before Mariel could stir he had caught her by the shoulders and was savagely pressing her close to him. The move was so unexpected that she was trapped in his circling embrace. She heard his broken phrases of endearment and realized that, no matter what he was, he really loved her.

Held tightly, his lips caressed her tawny hair. That afternoon he had stolen a mad kiss, but it must not be repeated. Her kisses were part of her love, which belonged to Lance Thayer alone!

"No!' Mariel cried. "You must not!"

"Here there is no Betty to interfere!" he answered throatily. "We are as much alone as if we were upon a desert island! Ever since I met you I have been dreaming of this one minute! Nothing can keep you from me now."

Mariel knew she was dealing with a danger as great as any that had skulked beside her during the past days. No intuition was necessary to inform her how completely she must keep her wits. She relaxed suddenly, allowing her head to droop to his shoulder. There must be some subterfuge she could use to trick him.

"I am faint!" she murmured. "Dizzy. One minute—"

Her quavering voice checked Belois. Solicitously, his embracing arms loosened. His hands gripped her elbows and he bent forward to scrutinize her.

That one split second of indecision was what Mariel awaited. With all of her young strength she tore herself from his hold, pushed him valiantly away, and ran toward the darkness of the woods.

As if in a dream she heard the oath Belois ripped out—his footsteps on the leafy carpet that was above the shore. Fortune favored her, for he slipped there on some damp moss. Over her shoulder Mariel saw him wavering at the top of the bank, clutching and grasping for a support to keep him from falling.

He hung there for another round of seconds, grotesquely silhouetted against the wan light of the fire. Then, abruptly, he disappeared from view.

Mariel, plunging into the velvety black of the woods, forced her running feet to greater speed.

SHE had lost all sense of direction. When sheer weariness at last slowed her to a walk, Mariel realized how utterly lost she was. A vast forest surrounded her. The Stygian darkness was impenetrable.

Her racing heart was filled with a grateful relief. She had escaped from the man she dreaded. Surely, Mariel told herself hopefully, her predicament was no worse than it had been before she had discovered the true identity of Belois.

Sooner or later she would strike the shore of the lake again. There she could wait for the dawn and the white hydroplane Lance Thayer flew. Even in the darkness of night and her

dilemma she was certain Lance would find her. Love would guide him to her.

"Lance!" Mariel whispered. "Lance!"

It was folly to press on and waste her remaining strength. Belois had spoken of a place where he had intended refueling his plane. Mariel recalled him saying it was on the other side of the mountain. And the chance of discovering some logging camp in the wilderness was too remote even to be considered.

Presently, after going forward for a long half hour, the woodlands ended abruptly in a little clearing. A minstrel stream sang a silver song, and high overhead the moon poured down its molten glow.

Mariel drank in the scene with eager eyes. Could it be possible she had stumbled across that same happy valley where she and Lance had picnicked a thousand years ago?

It seemed too fanciful, too unreal. Yet, there was the stream and there was the green side of one mountain

She waded out to him and the next moment was in his arms

marching down to meet the other. Mariel forced her tired feet on. The white glare of the moon lighted the valley mystically.

In this locality Lance had made his landing. She bent over and touched the lush grass to find the wheel tracks made by the machine they had used that day. There were no tracks fur-

rowed in the earth to meet her touch. She straightened up and saw the bank where Lance had whispered of love and cradled her in his strong, young arms.

There was a mossy tableland under murmuring spruce and clean-grown fir trees, but whether it was *their* bank Mariel could not be sure. She threw herself down upon it, straining her ears to the sounds of the night.

Was she safe there? Had she fled one danger only to encounter others? What wild animals might be prowling the trackless lanes of the forest?

Somehow a fear of material things failed to touch her. It was so easy to imagine the wraith of Lance on guard. She was in a hallowed spot and nothing would harm her!

Queer, disjointed imaginings possessed her. Her head ached from the stress of them. The problem of Betty, what she had learned about the false Fernier and what to-morrow promised.

The valley was protected from the sweeping west wind that brought the chill in its teeth. The ground had dried, and the moss was soft and yielding. Mariel's leaden lids went shut and she drifted off into the peaceful arms of deep, restful and dreamless sleep.

THE sun on her face awoke her. She was stiff in every joint. Her cherry-red lips seemed feverish and swollen. The red sweater had been torn by the underbrush. The stout, elk-hide shoes she wore were soggy, scuffed and shapeless things on her small feet, and her hair was in a hopeless tangle.

Resolutely she flung off the dark tide of memory. To-day she would have to be found. She could not endure hunger and hardship for another twenty-four hours. It behooved her to be up and to seek the lake over which the Forest Air Patrol planes flew.

In the bright sunshine Mariel saw that the valley was not the same spot where she and Lance had lingered. Her mind was clear of its fancies. Slumber had purged them away.

A deep wave of optimism spurred her on. Beside the singing stream she scooped tingling cold water up in her cupped hands and bathed her face in it. She used her fingers for a comb, attempting to untangle her tawny, polished hair. Then she drank deeply and struck off and into the woods.

As far as she remembered the Loup chain of lakes were to the north of her. The sun arose in the East. Her wrist watch told her the time was something after nine o'clock. In that event Old Sol would not have moved very far in its orbit. Keeping the sun pointed over her shoulder Mariel walked north.

There seemed to be a trail of sorts for her to follow. Possibly moose and deer had made it in their excursions to the lake. It ran in the right direction, and she followed it hopefully. Insects hummed about her. Strange, bright flowers flamed in the underbrush. Long fallen leaves made a soft carpet for her ragged shoes to traverse.

Hunger was a phantom that paraded along beside her. Save for the provisions taken from the wrecked plane, she had eaten nothing since leaving the island camp. She tried not to think of her yawning emptiness, pressing on at a steady, even pace.

It was almost eleven o'clock when Mariel caught a glimpse of the blue shine of water through the trees. Caution whispered to her. She did not know where she would come out on the shore. Perhaps unkind fate would bring her back to a spot near the one she had left and would throw her

again into the company of Jacques Belois.

Close to the last tree that reared up from the dense underbrush along and above the shore, Mariel shaded her eyes and considered her surroundings.

With a breath she moved out into the open. The shore was long, straight and unmarred by any wooded peninsula. Her feet sank into sand made by rocks ground to powder. The lap of the water was a welcome sound. She walked close to it and searched the cloudless sky anxiously.

Only an eagle, wheeling in the blue, was visible.

Mariel took off the red sweater and found a young sapling that bent easily under her grip. She hung the sweater on it and let it snap back into place. It hung waving there—a crimson flag of distress that might attract eyes focused through binoculars.

The high noon came, warm and still. Then it was two o'clock—three—four.

TOWARD five, when hope was ebbing, Mariel threw up her head. Were her ears tricking her? Did the faint, elusive hum she heard grow nearer or was it the buzzing of insects in the woods?

She sprang to her feet, desperately scanning the shadowed heavens. And then, faraway, she glimpsed a floating speck she knew to be a plane!

Which way was it flying?

Her eyes ached from the incessant strain. Her heart sank, rose and sank again. For one instant she felt sure the plane was coming in her direction. In the next breath she was equally positive it was rapidly going away from her.

A quickening breeze, rustling the tall trees, swelled her heart with hope. The hum of the plane's motor grew louder. It was coming her way!

Mariel waded out until the lake water was up to her knees. She waved her arms. The plane seemed to have increased in size. It was clear and white now against the sky. There must be no chance of its pilot failing to sight her.

She continued to wave until the machine's downward swerve told her she had been sighted. Joyously sobbing, Mariel dropped her tired arms and waited.

It was a Forest Air Patrol hydroplane. Banking, it circled gracefully for a descent and landing. How different from the ignominious fall of Jacques Belois's two-seater.

This white hydro struck the lake surface lightly, dashed up some spray and skimmed across to her. Heedless of the water that rose up to his waist, the pilot alighted and, with a shout, waded in toward her. Even before he had removed his helmet Mariel recognized Lance Thayer!

"Mariel! Sweetheart!"

She slipped into his arms, deathly tired, but happier than she had ever been before in her life.

"I waited so long for you, Lance, dearest!" she sobbed.

His handsome, boyish face was haggard. His eyes were gray stars that swam above her.

"I came as soon as I could. I've been flying since dawn. This lake was my last try. I knew I'd find you if I kept at it."

He asked a thousand questions all at once. Clinging to him, Mariel shook her head and drank in his kisses.

"Lance! Did you find Betty?"

"Last night—at the Black Star's hideout! She is safe at the island camp with your father. And, Mariel! What

luck. I made good on my vow, too!"

"You mean—"

"I mean," Thayer told her, "that I captured the air raider. I found the Black Star farther up this lake—near his wrecked plane. It was on a wooded peninsula and—"

"Lance! It isn't possible that the man we knew as Raoul Fernier—"

"Is the Black Star? That's exactly what I do mean, sweetheart. He's made a confession and it's all clear at last. His name isn't Fernier. I guess you know now he's Jacques Belois, an escaped prisoner. You'll learn everything later. Now, you must have something to eat and then we'll go straight back to Long Lake."

CHAPTER XI

IN the shanty on the island a cheerful fire held the shadows firmly at bay. Marshall Devoe sat before it, one arm around Betty and the other about Mariel. In a corner the bandaged head of Joe Fourfeathers was a pale blur.

"I suppose," Devoe said, "you two girls want me to go back and tell my story from the very beginning?"

"That is a good point to start from," the irrepressible Betty laughed, "now that we're all rescued and everything."

Devoe lighted his pipe with a splinter.

"First, this Frenchman's arrival at Six Trees. I'm only a hard-headed, unimaginative business man, but there was something about him I did not like. He was too suave, too slick. I could very easily imagine Mariel being impressed by the fellow—"

"Not to mention your youngest daughter," Betty put in. "She was impressed also. But she's got over that!"

"What could I do but put a damper on this imitation Fernier's courting? I decided on the foster child idea. If Fernier was a fortune hunter that would discourage him. Reluctantly, I told Mariel that and asked her to keep it a secret from you, Betty.

"About that time I began to receive threatening letters. They were always the same—on gray stationery. We know now that it was the bogus Fernier who sent them, but at that time they baffled me. They threatened me with the kidnaping of you girls unless I paid a sizable sum. The private detective agency I put on the case failed to make any headway and I became really alarmed over your safety."

"So much so," Betty declared, "that you decided on that mysterious trip and our vacation out here at the camp."

"Exactly. I hoped to outdistance the menace."

"Whereas," Betty murmured dryly, "I played directly into Raoul's hands by telling him where we were going. But how did I know he was the Black Star? This is all too much like a hectic movie."

"What was his idea?" Mariel asked. "Lance made him confess, but—"

"He came here that night," Betty explained rapidly. "I thought it was you, Mariel, returning with Thayer. He was masked, and I managed one scream. That was just enough to put Joe out of business."

"Bad man!" the Indian grunted from his corner.

"The next thing I knew," Betty resumed, "I was in Raoul's hideout. He locked me up and went back to get you, Mariel. Don't you see the idea? He planned to hold us both there until dad came across."

"That fall wasn't so unlucky after all," Mariel mused. "If he hadn't run out of gas he might have succeeded."

Betty laughed ironically.

"Not a chance. The bright-eyed Mr. Thayer had spotted the hideout. Lance pulled a nifty rescue, brought me back, found the Black Star and then called it a day by discovering you. Well, it's over now and we can go back to Six Trees and stun all our friends and neighbors with an account of this red-hot adventure."

"While the bogus Fernier," Marshall Devoe put in, "goes back to Sainte Pierre prison to finish his sentence and start a new one. Yes, all is well that ends well."

MARIEL opened the door of the shanty. She crossed the tiny porch and went down the steps. The night was studded with crystal stars. A wind blew across the lake. It told her that summer was past, but it could not chill the eternal summer that lived within her heart.

"Lance!" she cried softly.

A shadowy figure moved up the path from the dock.

"I thought you were never coming out, Mariel."

In his arms she surrendered to his ecstatic kisses. The moon watched them in their rapture. A vagabond breeze whispered joyously as it swung past, and the stars seemed to draw closer to hear their murmurings.

"I won't always be a Forest Air Patrol flyer, sweetheart. Some men in Montreal want me to take charge of a commercial fleet of planes as soon as I've served the time I signed up for. Waiting will be hard, but—"

Mariel's laugh was soft and sweet and musical.

"You don't suppose I'm going to wait, Lance? Not a chance, as Betty would say. We're going to be married right off. You're coming inside to tell father all about it."

Hand in hand, together they went up the path.

THE END

Love's Reason

IN careless calm, I said good-by;
You never dreamed the while
That every heartbeat seemed a sigh,
To wrestle with a smile.
I could not say, "Perhaps you'll come,"
"Or write," or any such—
Ah, dearest, smiling lips were dumb
Because I cared so much!

—Daisy Crump Whitehead

Handwriting and Happiness

By JOHN FRASER

JOHN FRASER, gifted handwriting expert, who has made a name for himself both in his native England and here in America, will analyze your handwriting. If you wish to know whether your sweetheart is the right man for you to marry, inclose samples of your own and your sweetheart's handwritings and address your letter to Mr. Fraser, care "Service for Sweethearts."

If you wish his help in finding the profession for which you are best fitted, address him care "Your Career."

You may take advantage of one or both services, but a coupon must accompany each request for handwriting analysis. Coupon will be found at the end of this department.

Mr. Fraser bases his judgments on the scientific rules of graphology. In no case does he forecast the future or attempt to reveal the past. Scientific graphology undertakes only to reveal the inner secrets of your nature.

As many answers will be given on these pages as space permits. All other questions will be answered by mail. A stamped, addressed envelope must accompany your request for analysis.

Girls' clubs or organizations may secure Mr. Fraser's services for an evening's lecture by addressing him care this magazine, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

"IF you were a woman you would better understand my position with Bob," a fair correspondent in Chicago wrote to me the other day.

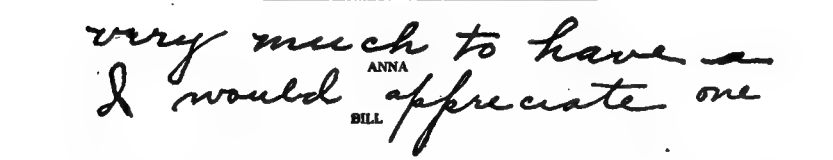
This little girl has evidently come to the conclusion that since I am only a "mere man," her chances of getting an unbiased answer to her problem are gone forever.

I want to assure her, and all others, that this is not so. The unalterable fact that I am of the masculine gender has nothing to do with my replies to your queries, one way or another.

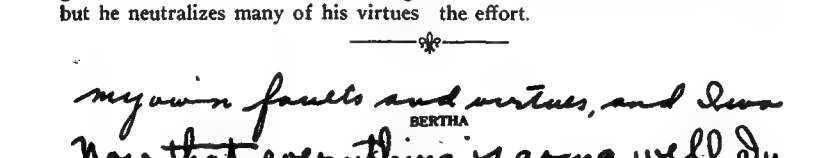
My own personal—and masculine—way of looking at things will always be subordinated to the actual scientific analysis of the handwriting before me.

So you see, I haven't a Chinaman's chance to be anything but fair and candid in my replies to you girls. I base my judgments not on what you yourselves tell me of your sweethearts, but on what your handwritings say.

SERVICE FOR SWEETHEARTS



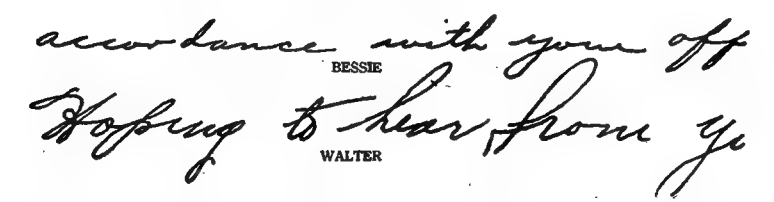
(Anna L., St. Louis, Missouri.) As far as I can see, you and Bill are pretty well suited to each other. Before the wedding day really comes off, however, I would advise you to have a heart-to-heart talk with him about certain eccentricities which he has acquired in his young life, and which would be better eliminated before he grows any older. Of course the same thing applies to you, Anna, for you are no angel yourself. To begin with Bill: I notice he is apt to get a little self-important at times. He swaggers and carries on before people to the discomfiture of those related to him. He is far too fond of the band wagon, and can be very impatient and mean when things don't go his way. In many respects Bill is a likable sort of fellow, generous hearted, and self-sacrificing, but he neutralizes many of his virtues by this "do-as-I-tell-you" manner, which he assumes too frequently for his own good. You, on the other hand, impress me as being a very sensitive girl. It takes little to upset you and start you crying. You are very romantic, and affectionate to the *n*th degree. When you get married to Bill you will have to talk less, otherwise there's going to be trouble on the Wabash! Don't forget that he likes to air his ideas as much as you do, and two talkers in a household is not conducive to "peace, perfect peace." You are much more spiritually-minded than Bill is, and as a result, desire to do and see many things which do not interest him. I'm afraid there will have to be a good deal of give-and-take between you two before there is real happiness in your home. But I think it would be worth the effort.



(Bertha O., Canton, Ohio.) Your two natures are a study in contrasts, which once more demonstrates the fact that Cupid's arrow is no respecter of persons. It wings its way into the most unexpected places, and surprises the most sophisticated. Your sweetheart, George, is a fine, upstanding sort of fellow, hard-headed in business, and conscientious in love. A man who has

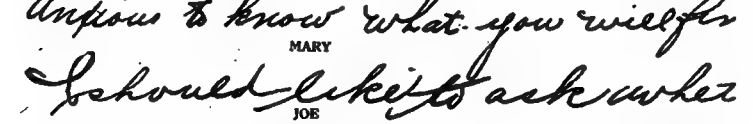
had the advantage of a good education, and who is putting his best foot foremost in an effort to get to the top of his profession. He is discreet as well as domineering. A man who keeps a lot to himself, and does his own thinking. When I look at the sentimental side of his nature I don't see much of anything in the way of emotionalism. He is what the girls of to-day would call a " cold baby." In love-making he would be silent and ponderous, as doubtless you are aware. A moonlight night in a canoe would be no more a tonic to the romantic side of his nature than ALL-STORY MAGAZINE would be to a woman-hater.

You, on the other hand, Bertha, are built for finer things than business and finance. You are extremely romantic, and desire nothing better than the ardent love of a clean-minded man. Whether you can ever expect this from your hard-boiled George is very problematical. Personally, I ha'e ma doots! My advice to you is, make no rash promises to him when he starts proposing marriage to you. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure any day.

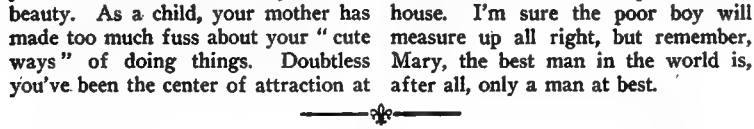


(Bessie McC., Fort Worth, Texas.) Your boy friend is " some man " when it comes to physical activity. I would call him a mixture of red pepper, power, and passion. A veritable steam engine in pants. What puzzles me most is, how in the world did *you* fall in love with such a tornado of the masculine gender, since you are the very antithesis of Walter in disposition and manner. In a close examination of his handwriting, however, I have to confess that your sweetheart has many admirable qualities. He is a man of great imaginative power, well-educated, and possessing fine business acumen. He is a fellow who is going to make his way in the world, and, what is more, he will reach his goal on his own momentum. It is very obvious to me that he has been reared in the wide-open spaces, and believes in having plenty of elbowroom. As is the case with all men of his stature and temperament, he is inclined to be overbearing and domineering at times. He would be unscrupulous and hard-boiled in his manner to those who cringe to him. When I peep into your disposition and nature I find you have all the earmarks of a quiet, unassuming girl. You lean toward the finer things in life. A good book, or sweet music would be far more appealing to you than the most exciting rodeo that any bunch of cowboys could organize. I have a hunch that your nature is going to suffer with Walter around. Whether you'll be happy or not with him as your husband is a question of how much " rope " you intend to give him. If you love him sincerely you will forgive and shut your eyes to a lot of his boisterousness. He is the type of man who believes in

being monarch of all he surveys. And that means in the parlor as well as in public life. But I verily believe you may find happiness together if you will try.

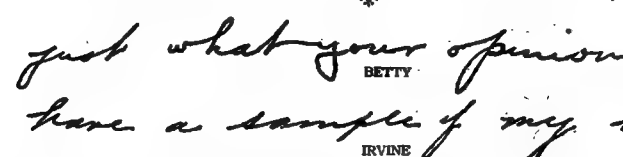


(Mary B. W., Erie, Pennsylvania.) I see no reason why you and Joe should not be real helpmeets to each other, and good sailors on the sea of matrimony. As far as I can observe through his pen strokes he is a manly man, straightforward in all his dealings. Though he is not quite as romantic as you, at the same time he likes nothing better than to be away from the "madding crowd," and alone with you in some sylvan dell. Of the two, I would say you are not only the more poetic, but also the more temperamental. If you want to know the truth, Mary, you are somewhat "spoiled." Possibly you have inflated ideas of your own beauty. As a child, your mother has made too much fuss about your "cute ways" of doing things. Doubtless you've been the center of attraction at many a party, and the admiration of many a schoolboy. All of which leads me to the conclusion that you are given to pouting a little too much at times. You are a fine type of girl in many ways. For example, you are very self-sacrificing, and unduly generous with your money, as well as with your time. You are spiritually-minded, and gravitate to the higher and better things in life. I see nothing coarse about you. Your tastes are simple, and your outlook on life sane and sensible. It is the sentimental side of your nature that requires watching. Your demands on Joe's time and affection will have to be modified if there's to be peace in the house. I'm sure the poor boy will measure up all right, but remember, Mary, the best man in the world is, after all, only a man at best.



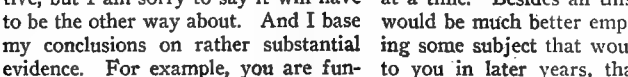
(Kate H., Duluth, Minnesota.) Judging by your pen formations both you and Henry are intellectual, and above the average in many ways. He has a quick, virile brain, while you have culture and refinement to your credit. I notice he has many qualities which you lack, while you could give him pointers in other directions. Intellectually, you are splendidly mated, and as companions I see nothing to hinder you from being as happy as kittens. The

other side of the picture, however, is not so promising. And my reason for saying so is based on several fundamental facts concerning your two natures. Through my knowledge of graphology, I see Henry as a man who is high strung and very quick tempered. He is impatient and opinionative. His will power is almost invincible. His obstinacy is mulish. He loves to have authority at home and abroad. Though he is not vain, in the strict sense of the word, at the same time he has a good conceit of himself, and wants people to know that Mr. Henry is in your presence, so, "silence in court," please. With you, it is same, but in a more feminine way. You also like to have your own way. You are petulant and fussy, and have a great gift of the gab. Your desire for appreciation, I'm afraid, could never be really satisfied as long as Henry is around. With these, and several other negative tendencies to your credit, I would hesitate about saying that you two young people would be really happy if you were married.



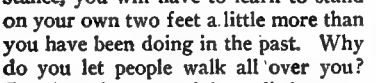
(Betty J., Manchester, New Hampshire.) I enjoyed reading your letter, and your remarks about Irvine, and his inconstancy to you. Of course you'll have to remember, Betty, that a youth of eighteen has a lot to learn, and his handwriting convinces me that, at the best, he is inclined to be flighty. I would love to answer your question about your happiness in the affirmative, but I am sorry to say it will have to be the other way about. And I base my conclusions on rather substantial evidence. For example, you are fundamentally flirtatious yourself. Though Irvine is your choice just now, I'm afraid you'll soon get tired of him. As a matter of fact, you are a difficult girl to handle. You are temperamental, and as changeable as the weather we are having here at present. He, on the other hand, is extremely sensitive and touchy. He would be far happier with a more prosaic sweetheart. You worry him, and keep him guessing the whole time. He never knows whether he is pleasing you or not. You act "funny," and are not always as grateful as you ought to be. Now, Betty, perhaps you'll see, from what I have told you, that the reason back of Irvine's changeableness is largely your own fault. The best of us male creatures get peeved and discouraged with a woman who doesn't know her own mind ten minutes at a time. Besides all this, I feel you would be much better employed studying some subject that would be of use to you in later years, than having a "good time" night after night, as you say you crave.

YOUR CAREER

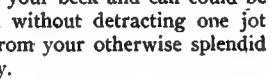


(Mrs. A. T. W., Hackensack, New Jersey.) Judging by your handwrit-

ing I would call you a born schoolmarm. You have such precise ways. Everything must just be so. You have had the benefit of a good education, and you are making the most of it. By your pen formations I find you have splendid judgment and a very logical way of thinking things out. Your memory is good, and your command of language is sufficient any day for the schoolroom. From another angle I see one or two weak points in your nature that might be better adjusted. For instance, you will have to learn to stand on your own two feet a little more than you have been doing in the past. Why do you let people walk all over you? Stand up for your rights a little more. Another thing, don't crave for appreciation so much. You are a little too fond of "the pat on the back" when you do something well. Of course this is a very feminine foible, but at the same time it smacks a little of the kittenish from a young lady of your age. Apart from these minor things you have a wonderful chance to make a good living in the teaching profession.



(Mrs. O. C., Peoria, Illinois.) Your penmanship reveals to me that you would be very successful as a social worker. Your physical activity is very pronounced in your pen strokes, and your tact leaves nothing to be desired. These qualities, coupled with your command of language, and a certain buoyancy of nature which I also observe in your disposition, will stand you in good stead in the helping and instructing of those whose lives are overshadowed by poverty and misfortune. You appear to be a woman who knows her way about in the world. You are going to succeed in this work, and what is more, you require no crutches in the form of "political pull" to get you into a position of trust. You are going right there on your own momentum, and by your own merit. Of course you are no angel, for here and there I see you have a few weak points in your make-up. For example, you would rise higher in my estimation if you were not so vain; your temper is worth the watching, and your impatience with those who are not at your beck and call could be eliminated without detracting one jot or tittle from your otherwise splendid personality.



(Miss F. N., Galt, Ontario.) Your candid way of expressing yourself regarding your qualifications for a position has made me doubly anxious to help you. Personally, I feel you are wasting your time in this real estate business you have got into. I am well aware of the fact that one can make a lot of money, and sometimes very quickly, in this line, but after all is said and done, should the almighty dollar be the all-important thing in your existence? I think not. The point you should settle once and for all is what profession is going to bring you the maximum amount of happiness. After analyzing your handwriting, I would say that you are specially fitted for architectural work. It is true this may not be far removed from the business of real estate, but nevertheless it has greater possibilities for advancement, and affords a larger scope for your particular talents. Your analytical mind, and your power of concentration

lead me to this conclusion. Your present position in the selling business may be very lucrative for the time being, but give a thought to this other work. Seek the counsel of some reputable architect in your town and you will find that his advice will coincide with mine. I wish you the best of luck.

I think the

(Miss S. H., Battle Creek, Michigan.) There is no question in my mind, Susan, as to what you are best suited for. In the first place you have an abundance of managerial ability and good judgment. You are simply cut out for the position of leader in some institution where there is an opportunity to uplift and brighten the lives of unfortunate little children. The whole trend of your writing tells me you have the foresight and the diplomacy which are so needful in such a position, as well as the patience to govern with justice. And what is more, it is not "all head and no heart" with you. Though you have the earmarks of a capable business woman, underlying all your external severity, you are a very feminine girl with a nature which is quite susceptible to sentiment. Your power of imagination is also well-developed, a trait very necessary to any one who has the responsibility of guiding the young mind into channels of right thinking. There is one thing I notice, however, which is not so commendable, and that is your inclination to be egotistical. I would say you are sometimes carried away with yourself, and get quite self-important. Give yourself the "once-over," Susan, and get away from these haughty mannerisms. I see great possibilities for you.

Girls' clubs and organizations can secure the services of John Fraser by writing to him care of this magazine. An evening's entertainment and instruction of surpassing interest is provided by Mr. Fraser's analyses.

If you belong to a club suggest to the other members that they set aside a meeting to be addressed by Mr. Fraser. Vocational problems of the members can be solved by having this expert in graphology analyze handwriting specimens. Simply address him care ALL-STORY, 280 Broadway, New York City.

JOHN FRASER,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway,
New York City.

This coupon is not good after November 30. A stamped addressed envelope must be enclosed when forwarding.

I enclose handwriting specimen for
—Service for Sweethearts.
—Your Career.
(Check which you prefer.)

Name.....

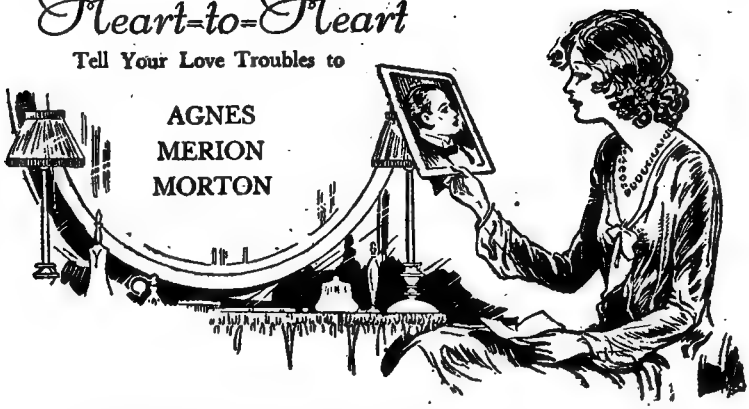
Street and No. .....

City..... State.....

Heart-to-Heart

Tell Your Love Troubles to

AGNES
MERION
MORTON



MRS. MORTON wants you to feel that she is a friend—some one to whom it is a comfort to tell your problems, who will advise and encourage you in your struggle for happiness, and who is always here to help. She is interested in you. Write to her freely, addressing your letter care All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

Every letter is confidential.

As Mrs. Morton receives so many letters, she cannot publish answers to all in the space allotted to her. Some, therefore, are answered by mail. Be sure to enclose a stamped, addressed envelope with your question.

THE first letter brought to our attention this week is of a kind I usually answer privately. Its subject is almost too tragic to be printed in a magazine whose primary aim is to make people feel that the world is a pretty good place, after all, and that there is happiness possible for everybody.

It is the saddest phase of The Eternal Triangle.

But the writer of this letter shows such a fine spirit, faces her bitter problem with such dignity and courage, and above all, has such human sympathy for her rival, that I think we should all learn a lesson from her, we who sometimes complain that our own comparatively small troubles are too hard to bear. So I give it to you:

Dear Mrs. Morton:

Mine is the same old story of a faithful wife being betrayed by her husband. After sixteen years of happy married life I am called upon to brave one of life's darkest storms. From this union God has blessed me with two lovely boys. They are the pride of my heart. There is nothing I would not do for their sakes. My husband, although not rich, has always provided us with every comfort according to his means. At home he was everything that a daddy should be. He always seemed to love us dearly,

nor do I ever remember hearing an unkind word from him. In fact, we were very happy.

He's a railroad man by trade, and his work takes him away from home a good deal. At first I used to find it very lonely while he was out on his trips, but after the boys came I got used to it. I loved him so dearly, and my faith in him was so strong that there was no room in my thoughts of another woman coming between us.

To make a long story short, last March a friend was kind enough to come and tell me that my husband had been leading a double life for about three years at the other end of the line where he was spending all his Sundays. At first I wouldn't believe it, and when I told him about it he denied every word. I was aware that there are always plenty of mischief-makers; maybe after all he might be right. But I made up my mind to keep my eyes open. A few weeks later I was told that this girl was to become a mother, and had left to go to a home in another city. That same day I found a letter in a coat I was mending. That letter proved everything.

Dear Mrs. Morton, can you imagine the shame and pain I had to endure? There are no words bad enough to express it. When my husband came home I showed him the letter. Of course he had to confess then.

After many tears on my part, and promises from him, we came to an agreement for the boys' sake. He was to pay all her expenses at the home and provide her with money until she was able to work again. She, on her part, promised to give up her baby for adoption. It was my wish that she should have the best of care, because, becoming a mother in a strange city, without any friends, must be terrible. I don't blame her, poor girl; if she loves him she has lots to suffer. I feel that she was only a victim, because I offered to give him his freedom if he wished to marry her, and he refused. Well, her baby boy was born in June, and she stayed at the home until October. He sent her three hundred and fifty dollars, out of which she paid out one hundred and ninety-seven dollars for her keep and the baby's. She had the rest for herself.

My husband had given me his word of honor that as soon as she found work he would never write to her again or see her at any time. On my part, I was to let things go on at home the same as before, and I did. Well, what do you know, when she left the home she took her baby with her and refused to give him away as she had promised, but she found herself a job. Ever since she started working I often asked him if he had heard from her, and he'd say, "No. He guessed he had heard the last of her." Like a poor fool, I thought I had found a silver lining to my black cloud, and I was trying very hard to forget the past. For I believe we must forgive if we want to be forgiven.

Last Friday I went to a party in the neighborhood while my husband went to bed. When I got home he was sleeping soundly, so I took a notion to look through his pockets (a deed I had never done before). Why I did it I can't explain, unless it was the evil one himself made me. I was well repaid for it, too. I found another letter from her, dated a few days before. Telling that she loved her baby so dearly that even to please him she would never give it away (you can't blame her for that, either), and she wanted him to come and see the baby. If he came she knew that he couldn't help but love and

want them back again. I am most certain that he had been writing to her, because there were other things she was asking him to tell her.

Saturday morning I got his breakfast as usual. While we were talking I asked him if he had heard from that girl. He answered me in a very pleasant way that he hadn't. It took all there was in me to act natural, because the second time he has hurt me the most of all. I know now that way down in his heart he is as false as he can be, I am sure, both to me and her. Even though I gave him his freedom he would never marry her. I am so upset over this last lie that I can't think what is best for me to do. I am too ashamed to go to friends with my troubles right now, I couldn't stand their sympathy. So here is where your part comes in. Will you be my friend in need? I'd love to have your advice. If I was alone I would know what to do, but when you have children it's a different story. Will you please tell me what the laws of this state are in regard to a common-law wife? What can she demand of my husband for herself and baby if it comes to law? On the other hand, what would be our rights as his legal wife and children? Dear Mrs. Morton, help me if you can, and thank you for listening to this long letter. It has been some relief just to tell you, for I feel you will understand.

Betrayed.

I am glad you felt you could write me this letter, intensely sorry though I am that you had it to write.

First of all, it is too bad this small sin of lying should so distress you when you were able to adjust yourself to the big sin. I want you to think of that lie from a different angle. People's motives are never unmixed, and perhaps your husband told you what he did partly for your sake, from a mistaken idea of saving you worry. He did it to save his own face, too, of course, but I am sure he also imagined he was sparing you.

Now for the legal aspects of the case. A common-law marriage is recognized in very few places, and never when either the man or woman is already married in the regular way to some one else. This girl has no claim for herself, but your husband can be made to support the child if she is unable to do so. I know you will agree with me that this is only fair. Even so, his legitimate sons come first, and would be provided for first in any court.

Unjust as it may seem, you could not now get a divorce on the grounds of infidelity, because you condoned your husband's offense and took him back. His misconduct might, however, be brought up as a proof he is unfit to have the boys, should you get a legal separation.

My advice to you is, sit tight, but be on your guard. Live one day at a time. Try not to brood over this thing. Should you have further proof of his continuing to see the other woman, *then* call him to time. Have it out with him again, and say he must choose between you, or if he gives you new grounds for divorce you will take advantage of them. But it is hard to raise boys without a man to help you, and if he is a good father to them, you must think very seriously before deciding that you cannot endure his duplicity. I am sure he loves you best, anyway, but he probably does not know how to get out of the difficulties he has himself created. While you love him, stick by him, faulty as he may have been.

May I say in closing, I am proud of you that you can still speak with compassion of the unfortunate girl in the case. When all is said and done, you are infinitely better off than she is. Your position is assured; no shame attaches to you. Wherever the story was told all the sympathy would be yours, and she would be harshly condemned by hundreds of people whom she had not wronged at all.

The next letter is another version of the triangle above mentioned, serious, too, but not so tragic, for in this case it is not too late.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

Mine seems to be a puzzling problem, that is, I mean, for me. During my vacation, which was the last two weeks in August until the first part of September, I was visiting a girl friend who lives in a near-by town. Now this girl friend of mine worked in an office, and a certain young man worked out of the same office. By that I mean he was usually on the road, but came into this office different times during the day to file his work. When I was there I met this man, and at the same time he was engaged to be married and the wedding date was set for the last day in December, to a young lady who lives in a town about forty miles away from where he works.

Now, Mrs. Morton, I know for the truth that he was true to the girl he is to marry — did not go out with any other girls at all—but two days after I met him he asked me if he might come to see me, and since then I have been going out with him as many as six nights in a week. And I have fallen hopelessly in love with him—and he has also with me—but he feels it his duty to marry this girl, as he has been engaged to her almost two years, and both his and her parents are looking forward to their marriage. He seems to think, in a way, he has spoiled this girl's chance, and is under obligation to her and should marry her even if he has to forfeit his happiness. Within the last three weeks he has gone to see this girl once, but he has been to see me about eleven or twelve times.

He told me he cared for me just as soon as we met, and every time he sees me he cares more. He also said he felt he loved the girl he is going to marry, but loves me more than he ever loved her, and can never forget me. "Actions speak louder than words," as is a great saying, and he surely shows by his actions that he does.

One evening last week I noticed in his pocket a very pretty silk handkerchief—I admired it, and the next day I received it through the mail—written in ink, in his own handwriting across the top, "To my only sweetheart," and also signed his name.

This girl drives her car, also I drive mine. She drove down to see him three times in the last six weeks, but he never has asked me to drive over, but he comes to see me, although every time I go to see my girl friend he never fails to come up. She also visits his parents (they live in the town where she does—he works away from home), and even stays with them sometimes when he is not there.

He is considered very good-looking, is about five feet eleven inches tall—weighs one hundred and seventy-five pounds, and has medium brown straight hair. Also I am considered pretty—am five feet six inches tall—weigh one hundred and twenty-one pounds—and have light curly hair. He is twenty-two; I am twenty.

If he would go straight to her and

tell her frankly that he cares more for some one else—I don't know what would happen, as she seems just wild about him. God knows what she would do. What would happen if we would go away quietly and be married? At night I lie awake and worry. Mrs. Morton, please tell me what you think of him, the other girl, and also me. Tell me frankly—keep nothing from me—as you are the only one to whom I may go for advice, and whatever it is it will be greatly appreciated. Please tell me all that you can, as it means a lot to me, also the happiness of three persons. *Waiting.*

Child, I think your young man is too young to know what he wants, and I'd like to advise *him* very seriously to wait a while before he marries anybody, until his affections have a chance to become fixed instead of fluctuating about from one person to another. However, it is you who have come to me, not he. You have been indiscreet, surely, to see so much of another girl's fiancé, but I'm not going to scold you. The matter is really up to him. All you can do is refuse to see him any more unless he will break with the other girl.

It is not big and fine and noble at all, but very reckless to marry anybody from a sense of duty. The "honorable" thing, really, is to tell the truth, for a marriage contracted like that has not one chance in a hundred of being anything but a miserable failure. It is not right, *especially* from the point of view of the girl he is to marry. It is not fair to her, nor to himself, nor to you. If he can't be true to her before marriage he certainly won't be true to her after; and he would be "spoiling her chance" a great deal more by marrying her than by asking to be released. We have one life to live, and nothing can ever be gained by deciding to live that life with a person we do not love.

No man can spoil the chances of so young a girl as either of you. There are many years ahead of you in which to find some one who may be infinitely more suitable than he appears to be now. And, my dear, if you do take a firm stand with him, and he breaks with the other girl, I hope you will not rush into matrimony yourself. Wait a little. You can well afford to. Let him see if it really is the real thing this time. You won't regret a little time of waiting whereas you might have bitter reason to regret haste.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

Just a few lines to find out if you could advise me in my trouble. I am a young girl of twenty-one years of age, and I have been keeping steady company with a young man of about my age, and as he lives in a different city, we could see each other but once a week. I was very much in love with him, but I never showed him I was. But he was always showing that he loved me. He was a true friend, a good chap, never offended me in any way.

But last Sunday he didn't come as usual. What shall I do? Shall I write him? Or call him and find out the reason? He has a ring of mine that he was wearing, and it was understood between us that he was to wear it only a little while. Should I ask him for it? As it was given as a birthday present to me by darling mother, I do not want to lose it. Please advise me. I've got the blues so badly. *Irma D.*

Irma, I think you have allowed yourself to become depressed over this

matter too quickly. No doubt before my answer can reach you you will have received your friend's explanation. Wait and see in any case. It is up to him to let you know the reason for his absence, since you were expecting him. If he *never* turns up again, you might write him a cool but not unfriendly little letter and ask for your ring back. But not for a month or so anyway.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I haven't any troubles to tell you, fortunately. I've had my share, but they are over now, or for the present anyway. But I see you don't favor early marriages, and I want to say that I don't either. For I was married too young myself, and it turned out a big mistake, so I'll just tell you about it, and if you think it will help anybody you may print this letter.

I am only eighteen and a half years old, but I have had a great deal of experience in that short time. When I was just fifteen my mother introduced me to a man twenty years older than I. His attentions fascinated me at first, and when mother told me it was her greatest wish for me to marry him, I did—at the age of fifteen and seven months. We lived at my home, and we soon found out what a "brute" he was. There's no other word for what we went through but one that begins with H——. He never struck me, so I stood his drunkenness and continual grouching. Then, after two years I was going to have a little baby, and I was glad to have some one to keep me company, but he was so abusive about it that I was afraid. He did strike me then—almost every night, and once he knocked my mother down when she tried to shield me. That was more than we could stand. We packed our trunks and sold most of the furniture and went away. Mother had friends here, two hundred miles from our old home, and we came and stayed with them until the baby was born. Now I have a good job, and mother has a small flat and takes care of the baby. She has some money of her own, of course, for I could not do it all. We are happy, but I often think how much happier we would be if I had only waited to get married until I knew what I was doing, and had picked a decent man.

Cheerful.

You are right, Cheerful, I do disapprove of early marriages. In fact, I'm almost too much prejudiced against them. Still, there are exceptions to every rule, you know. Read the following letter:

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I have come to a problem which I am trying to decide, looking at it from all angles. You may think I am very young to have such a problem confront me, but since my mother died seven years ago, when I was only eleven years old, I have roomed and worked out and gone to school until I was in the second year second half high school. A year ago last May my grandmother became very ill, so I was forced to discontinue school and came to her home to take care of her, my two sisters, a brother, and my father.

Just after I came here I met a young man not more than twenty-five years of age, of whom I instantly became fond. I learned later that he was a widower, and had two little children. Well, he came to the house very often to see my father, and when he was not in this young gentleman would pass his evenings with me. Finally it got so every night he came to the house and

my father and he and I would often go out together, my father little realizing how much our fondness amounted to. Now that he sees how deeply I love this man he is doing his best to break up our friendship. He thinks I should stay home and take care of him and his children and mother. She (my grandmother) is bedridden now, so I have to wait on her a great deal beside doing all the housework and getting the meals for the others. My sisters and brother are much younger than I am. They go to school yet.

Jack, as I will call this man, although it is not his true name, has asked me to marry him as soon as he can get his furniture together and get a home furnished, which would be by next February. I love his children dearly. I had them with me all last summer, and I can truthfully say they think there is no one like their father or myself. They are too young to remember their mother, but I could not bring them up without the knowledge of their own mother, because I know she is still watching over them.

Please tell me if you think I am wrong in marrying this man. He is more than eight years my senior, very tall, dark complexioned and jolly. I am tall, dark, very sincere, earnest and very quiet. I have never been with people my age, always older ones were my lot, because I did not care for the silly things that make up an ordinary young girl's life. I have many friends among the fathers and mothers of my friends, both boys and girls alike. Not one of them would refuse to advise me or do anything I could ask, but this one question is something I do not feel like telling them, and I have read so many letters you have answered, and your advice has always seemed to be the only way out. I have a girl friend who wrote you, and your letter made her see things in a different light, therefore her home is still complete, and she is so thankful she is still able to be with her two little girls. She was prepared to leave her husband, home, and two little girls. Many times she tells me she is so happy you answered her letter.

A Motherless Girl.

P. S.—I see I have left out one of the most important things of all. Please do not think I would be deserting my little sisters and brother. I have an aunt, my father's sister, who is doing housework for other people, and she would stay home and do it here if I got married. I would probably take my youngest sister with me, most of the time anyway. She gets on better with Jack's children than she does with her own brother and sister—they tease her so.

Now, ordinarily, I would say, "No. Wait a while. The responsibility is too great for so young a girl to undertake." But I truly think this case is different. From your letter one gets a pretty good idea of your character and disposition, and I do not believe an early marriage between you and this young man would be a mistake. You have all the responsibilities of a house and motherhood anyway, without the sweetness of love; you certainly understand what your duties would mean, and—well, in short, I say, go ahead, and God bless you!

We had recently in this department a letter from a young woman who signed herself "Slave-wife."

That letter has received, to date, the largest number of answers of any I have ever printed here. A few of these answers follow, and I hope to share

more with you when there is room for them:

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I've never written to a magazine before, but the letter signed "Slave-wife" makes me so mad I've got to get it off my chest. How can any woman in this day and generation be such a little fool? Of course no husband should ever be allowed to get that way in the beginning. She should have started right out by telling him where to get off. But since she didn't, and since he's got the way he is, I guess it's too late to do anything with him. The only thing she can do now is tell it to the judge.

I advise her to ask Miss Allen to find out when court is in session, and then go down there some morning, walk all the way in her bedroom slippers, since that's all he'll let her wear, and tell the court her story. She needn't be ashamed—he's the one to be ashamed—and if she'll only do it she'll shame him before the whole town. All she has to be ashamed of is putting up with it. The judge will probably advise her what to do, but if he asks her what she wants she can say, "To have my husband arrested for cruelty."

There's only one thing else, if she doesn't want to do that, and that is to brain him some night with a hammer!

Yours wrathfully,

Irate Irene.

Very different in tone is the following letter from a woman who apparently thinks the best of everybody:

Dear Mrs. Morton:

My heart aches for poor little "Slave-wife." It seems such a pity for a man to act as her husband does, to be so miserable and make her so miserable, all over nothing. His jealousy is like a disease, and I think he ought to be psycho-analyzed, or take up one of the new, cheerful religions. Unless he tries to help himself it will be very hard for her to help him, but still she might try.

First of all, Slave-wife, I advise you to forget that you're afraid of men. For that is what's the matter with you. Your father cowed you when you were a child, and now you have a husband who is a bully, too, in a different way, and you let him cow you, too. First of all, get the idea into your head that he's nothing but a big, overgrown boy that some one allowed to run wild, and that it's up to you to cure him. Go on strike. When he comes home let him find you reading, or manicuring your nails, or drying your hair. Tell him you decided not to get dinner to-night because you'd like to eat out for once. (Even if there's no good restaurant in your little town, there's bound to be a road house or tea room within a few miles.)

If he blows up, which he probably will, walk out of the room. If he follows you and keeps on scolding, sing at the top of your lungs and try to drown him out. If he says you've gone crazy, answer, "On the contrary, I've just come to my senses. I'm tired of living like this, and I won't do a thing for you until you let me have a say about a few things. I won't do another bit of work in this house again until you let me have some of the things other women have." Say it and mean it, and stick to it. Don't let him scare you. Make up your mind that you are going to have a normal, happy home and you'll get it! You mustn't expect to reform him all at once, of course. He's got used to being the

Big Chief around your house and he'll have to learn better gradually. But you can teach him if you will, I'm sure of that. Only you must refuse to be bluffed out of it. Don't cook for him, don't sweep or dust or clean; don't even make his bed. And don't let him kiss you or come near you, either. He may try soft soap if he finds he can't browbeat you into submission. Beware of that, too!

I wish you'd take up Unity yourself. I'm sure it would help you to assert yourself, in the very nicest way, and get your rights. And perhaps your husband would be interested in the literature, without knowing what you hope it would do for him. I'm sure he can be made to see the error of his ways, and that life will be better for both of you.

I don't want Mrs. Morton to print my address, but she has it if you or your good neighbor, Miss Allen, should care to write to me.

An Unknown Friend.

Here is a gentle little letter, not so practical as the above, but very sympathetic, and I'm sure "Slave-wife" will be glad to read it. It is typical of several other letters I cannot print in this issue:

Dear "Slave-wife":

I read of your sad story in ALL-STORY MAGAZINE, *and it deeply impressed me. I am only a girl myself, and have never been married, but I can realize how sad and lonely you must be without ever seeing your people or having young friends. I haven't many friends myself, and would like to gain new ones.*

I can sympathize with you about the pretty clothes, for I haven't ever had any myself. I always liked pretty clothes and things. I know that you must feel terrible when you are not allowed to read newspapers and magazines and go out. Maybe by gaining an influence over your husband you can persuade him to let you have friends and the things that you desire. I am sure that your husband loves you, and that it's just his way. I think that he wants you all to himself. I know that you must feel like a bird in a cage. But cheer up, the best is yet to come.

I feel strange writing to some one that I have never seen before, but I suppose that you will feel just as strange reading it. I wish you would write to me.

Louise.

The last letter is unique in its way—I've never received one quite like it. I am printing it without comment, except to answer the gentleman's question:

Dear Mrs. Morton:

Your letter from "Slave-wife" tickled me. I'm glad to learn there is one man in this world who knows how to keep a woman in her place. I didn't know it was possible to-day. I myself have been married twice, and I divorced both my women, one because she ran away with another man, and the other because she was lazy and shiftless around the home. I finally told her to get out, and that gave me grounds for calling it desertion. Now I would like to get married again if I can find a woman who would appreciate a good home and would be a true helpmeet to a man.

This "Slave-wife" is apparently nothing but a little flirt, always looking for an excuse to speak to men, and I'm glad, for one, that she's got a husband who can handle her. Why isn't she having babies instead of writing com-

plaining letters to you? That's all women are good for, anyway.

It makes me sick to see what women get away with nowadays. There's a young fellow lives next door to me, and he's a born fool if there ever was one. They have a baby about six months old, and I see him getting up in the night and wandering around in his bathrobe, heating milk, etc. As if it isn't his wife's place to do all that if she won't nurse it.

And nights after dinner he's out in the kitchen helping her with the dishes, and lots of times I see him taking in the clothes or hanging them out. You'd think he'd be ashamed. He waits on her hand and foot; he seems to think a woman isn't to do anything.

Mrs. Morton, can you find me a lady who will be a true helpmeet to a man? I am not particular about age, but would like her to have a little money if possible.

Yours hopefully,
Al Higgins.

Mr. Higgins, this is not a matrimonial bureau, and I am afraid I could do nothing for you if it were.

What's in Store!

Here are just a few of the tempting offerings in the November 30 issue of ALL-STORY, on the stands November 27:

THE CLOWN'S SWEETHEART

By Ruby M. Ayres

Gripping and poignant tale of the circus and of how the fierce love of The Boneless Wonder for the Rose Girl brought tragedy and redemption to the sawdust ring.

THE TAG-ALONG GIRL

By Helen Ahern

A big new story by a writer of love stories whose name is known to every one. Helen Ahern offers you an appealing heroine in Lora Stanley who lived on the wrong side of town and who had always wanted to be a professional dancer. How she gave up her ambition for love, and then learned that Cam's love was— But read it for yourself. You'll love Lora!

RED HEAD

By Georgia Maxwell

Red? And how! *And* curly into the bargain! She hated it. Then she fell in love with a handsome aviator who had been in a smash, and his name was Redman. And when he removed his head bandages—

Also a generous installment of the enthralling serial, "Mad Marriage." How did Rod and Sybil live on their desert island? Separated by Sybil's impetuous and tragic marriage, what could they do when true love came to them?

Choosing a Career

Conducted by
ELIZABETH WRIGHT

HAVE you found your ideal job? Are you satisfied with your present salary? If not, let Miss Wright advise you.

In these pages many new and attractive professions for girls are discussed. If one of these appeals to you, and you wish to learn more about it, address your letter to Elizabeth Wright, care "Choosing a Career" Department, All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, New York. A stamped, addressed envelope will bring you an answer by mail.

WE were discussing the subject of doing typewriting for authors as a means of earning a good living. A young woman, holding a high executive position, remarked: "Yes! But one must have a college education to become an efficient typist for authors."

And to this I answered: "I believe that any young woman with a common school experience can succeed in this profession."

A common school education is, really, all that is required of the typist who is to cater to writers. The field is not overcrowded, and prompt, accurate copyists are few and hard to find.

Purchase a new machine with good, sharp, clear type. If necessary buy it on the installment plan, but let your machine be good.

From the magazines and newspapers, the publishers' lists, and from every other source available, select the names of those who write. Send a letter to them, stating that you are a typist and would be glad to copy manuscript for them. Make each letter individual. Without being too personal, try to convey the idea in your letter that you are familiar with the works of the author and would be all the better calculated to do intelligent typing. The more delicately this letter is worded the better. It should be perfectly spelled, correctly punctuated, and very neat in appearance.

You can take it for granted that every writer already has a typist. But this is a world of chance and change, and the typist may move to another town, die or inherit a fortune, and the author be looking for some one equally good to take her place.

Do not do typing for amateurs unless on a cash basis. And do not, in the beginning, work on commission—on the prospect of the manuscript being sold.

While waiting for answers to your letters familiarize yourself with the markings which an author places—or may place—along the margin of his copy. They are the terms used in proofreading, such words as "stet" and "tr." and "kill." They, and a dozen others related to them, can be found in the back of every standard dictionary; and an hour's talk with a friendly proofreader will tell the novice how to use them to advantage.

Now, supposing you have received an answer from a writer and are invited to call and get manuscript. You must go prepared to give references. The manuscript which is placed in your hands may be the result of months of brain work, and you are required to keep it secret. Naturally a writer wishes to make certain that you know this fact.

This Week's Hint For Earning More Money

Money can be made in one's own home by catering to the neighbors. In these days of kitchenettes the problem of home entertaining is a serious one, and the girl who is willing to take advantage of this situation can be fairly certain of a steady income.

Make sandwiches!

There is no end to new and novel varieties. They are made in two, three and four stories, and can be served on plates with a knife and fork without violating the laws of etiquette.

Have rye, brown, wheat, whole wheat, graham, nut, raisin and date bread on hand. Then notify every one you know—or don't know!—that you are making sandwiches for sale. With a telephone the rest is easy. Neighbors having evening callers, or impromptu card parties, will call up and ask for a certain number of sandwiches of a certain kind. With the aid of canned meats, vegetables, jam, etc., a very nice assortment of sandwiches can be made up in a very short time.

With a trade established you will never lack for custom. Your job will be to keep materials in the house and answer the phone calls. Salad sandwiches, vegetable club, and croquette sandwiches—another name for hash—have a wide vogue at evening parties.

Sweet sandwiches are also a staple. They are made with maple sugar, dates, strawberry jam, etc.

A good sandwich brings an excellent price, and the home sandwich maker will add appreciatively to her income.

As to price. To ascertain current rates you can take a manuscript—one written by yourself, of course—to one of the big typewriting concerns. Ask what price with two carbons, with one carbon, for a straight copy. You will probably find that it runs about fifteen cents per typewritten page. Do not try to undersell the others. Keep your price up. But give better work and better service than the others give.

If the author's manuscript is written by hand, and the handwriting is difficult, you can ask almost twice as much as though it were already typed. Many writers compose upon the machine, then hand their work over to be rewritten in a professional manner.

When the author puts his manuscript into your hands, you should, if you are wise, read it through at once from start to finish. There may be something in it which you do not understand. The author will explain and the work will go much more quickly. Be certain that you comprehend the meaning of every word in the manuscript before you.

Otherwise do not take it, for your work will show where you are ignorant. This applies specially to medical and scientific essays which the novice must never attempt.

When the work is finished, be sure to read it over twice.

Upon a separate sheet of paper make notes of whatever appeared strange to you in the copy, an inaccuracy of name, date or event. When you take the work back to the author you might mention it very politely. A really great writer will thank you for helping him. If, however, he tells you that he does not require your assistance in the preparation of his work, say nothing. You can't afford to take offense.

Ask one author to recommend you to his friends. An author knows other writers. Put a card in the stationery shops near your home and in the hotels that have no professional typist. Many typewriter concerns will take your name and send work to you.

Have a telephone. And, as soon as you can, take a greenhorn to train and assist you in the small matters. A writer may prefer to bring his script to you, and you must have your place of business—be it your own parlor or a tiny office, somewhere—in shipshape condition, looking like a workshop.

At the end of a year you ought to be clearing eight dollars a day, above all expenses. The figure was given to me by a successful typist who, herself, clears a great deal more. If your earnings fall short of that sum it is time to look for a fault in your own workmanship.

A Hint

Now that you've got this far in the magazine, you've probably read all the stories, and you know which one you're remembering with the greatest pleasure.

Tell us which story you like best.

All you need do is clip the coupon a few pages further on, fill it in and drop it in the mail.

We'll do the rest! If you like the stories by a certain writer, we'll see that you get others in the near future. If there is a type of story or an author you would like to see in ALL-STORY, let us know.

Do your bit and we'll do ours! Fill in the coupon.

In Confidence

Practical First Aid to Everyday Living

Conducted by

DOROTHEA DALE

ANY question about the little problems that confront you daily in your business or social life Mrs. Dale will be glad to answer. No question is too small. Write her about anything that is perplexing you—how to word a letter, how to travel, what present to give, what to say and when, table etiquette, et cetera.

If an emergency arises and you need immediate advice your letter will be answered by return mail, if you will inclose a return envelope stamped and addressed.

All letters will be held in strict confidence.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

My name is plain Mary Smith, but I'm going to change it soon to Bohlayer. And I have two questions to ask you. First, as I'm an orphan and alone in the world, how should my wedding announcements be worded? Second, my friends are beginning to give me silver—all the same pattern. It is unmarked. Must I have it marked "S" for Smith? It seems so foolish, when it will soon be "B"—for a prettier name, too!

Mary Smith.

Well, Mary, there was a time when your silver and linen would have had to be marked "S," but it is a fact that many a bride now waits until she is married, and then has her silver engraved with the initial of the new name. This is partly due, I think, to the practice of buying silver of a certain pattern and adding to it in installments. What you acquire after marriage would be marked with the initial of your married name, of course, and it's nicer to have it all alike.

If you have no relatives at all—no aunt or older cousin, even—it would be best for the mother of your fiancé to announce the marriage. Do you know her well? If so, go to her and ask her advice about your problem. Do not ask her in so many words to have the announcements made by herself and her husband, however; wait for her to offer to do so. Even if she lives in another town, and you have never seen her, I presume she has written to welcome you into her family. In that case, you may write and tell her of your difficulty, ask her what you should do. If she does not offer to

Google

help you out, you and your future husband will have to make the announcement yourselves. Thus:

Miss Mary Smith
and
Mr. John Bohlayer
have the honor to announce their marriage
on Saturday, the fourth of January
Nineteen Hundred and Thirty
at Chicago, Illinois

Any high-grade stationer will advise you about style of engraving, texture of paper and other details, and will show you models to follow.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

Almost two months ago I met on a train a young man I used to play with as a child. He was very interesting, and seemed interested, and said he'd like to see me again. Since then I have not heard from him, although he lives in this same town. Do you think it would be chasing him to write and remind him?

Puzzled.

It would be perfectly proper for you to write or telephone and invite this young man to any sort of party except a sit-at-home party of two. Why don't you have a few friends, mutual if possible, in some evening, and invite him too? Be friendly to him when he comes, not too personal; make sure that he enjoys himself and he will want to come again. No girl should "run after" a man—in the first place, it only makes him run away faster! But there is too much competition for a girl to sit at home with folded hands, waiting for something to happen. She really has to do a little stalking; only be discreet about it.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

The man who was to have been my husband has just been killed, and his mother thinks I should wear mourning for him. My own mother does not want me to, especially since we can't afford it. What shall I do?

Bereaved.

It is never *necessary* to wear mourning, even for one's nearest relatives. Many people refuse to do so, partly because of the depressing effect heavy black garments have on those about them. You may compromise by dressing very quietly and inconspicuously, and explaining to your fiancé's mother frankly that an entire new wardrobe is beyond your means. In deference to her wishes, however, you might wear a black dress or an all-white one when you go to see her, and have your winter coat, if it is not a new one this year, dyed dark gray. If that is not practical, wear an arm band.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

What would you say is the rule most important to remember when going into society?

Newcomer.

The fundamental law underlying all human relationships is *consideration for other people.* You will find that almost all real social errors are rude and impolite, unattractive, unsightly. They often show a want of kindness of heart as well as an ignorance of manners.

And now your question gives me a chance to get a little personal grievance off my chest. In the "Etiquette" advertisements the unfortunate person who has made some social blunder, often an insignificant one, is pictured standing in dejected attitude, overwhelmed with shame, while the supposedly well-bred people, Those Who Know, titter or smile behind their hands in the background.

Now, those who really know never make another uncomfortable, no mat-

ter what he has done that is wrong. They just don't notice it. A well-bred woman, for instance, does not make a fuss, nor scold, nor get excited even when a waiter spills something on her best dress. She allows him to sponge it off as well as possible, and then goes on with her meal as if nothing had happened. She does not parade out of the dining room after threatening the management and making general unpleasantness for everybody. This woman, dignified in a trying situation, would certainly not shrug her shoulders nor so much as lift her eyebrows if she saw some one pick up a spoon when he should employ a fork.

The real social offenders in those aforementioned advertisements are the snickering observers who consider themselves so superior. They brand themselves as boors and snobs, and ignorant of the most important rule of all—Be Courteous. People who have natural good manners also have hearts that are in the right place.

Won't You Fill This Out and Mail It To Us?

THE EDITORS,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

Here is my opinion of the stories in this issue:

First Love .....

Crisis .....

Winter in Her Heart.....

Moon of Araby .....

Happiness Junction .....

A Line for Lucine .....

Mad Marriage .....

Wooing Wings .....

My favorite authors are .....

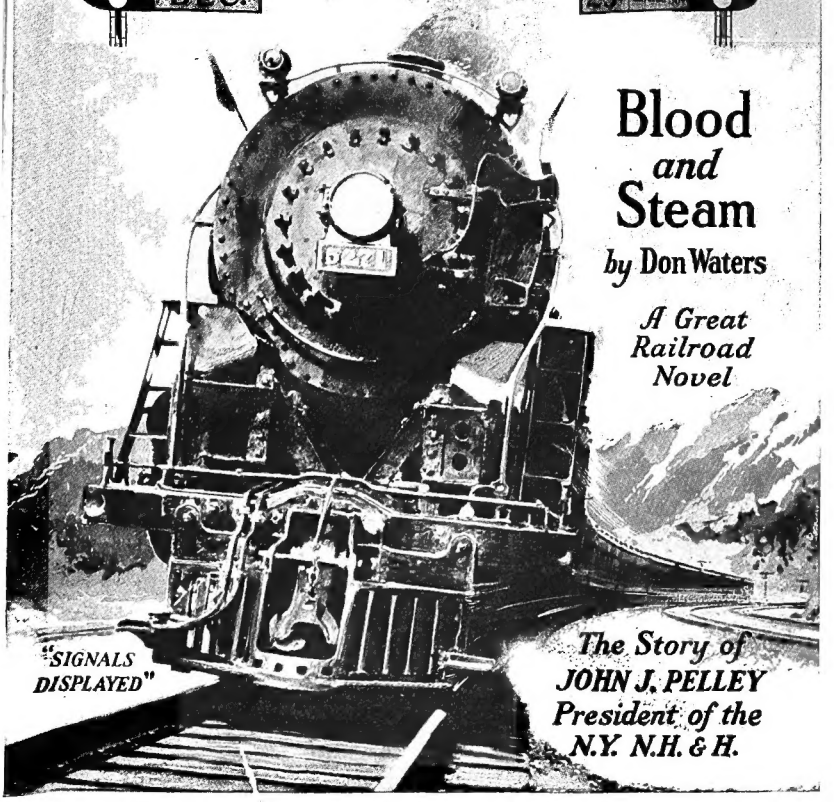
Name .....

Address .....

(Name and address may be omitted, if desired)

This New Magazine will be on sale November 30, 1929

RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE



Blood *and* Steam

by Don Waters

A Great Railroad Novel

"SIGNALS DISPLAYED"

The Story of JOHN J. PELLEY President of the N.Y. N.H. & H.

This is the new matched Three-piece Balanced Set, including Golf and Handbag Pencil. For Men, $18.00; for Ladies, $16.50. Others lower.

It need never be replaced, this Lifetime° gift

Through this Christmas and every coming Christmas, a Lifetime° pen serves on; it is guaranteed to perform like new for the owner's lifetime. Longest-lived, most useful, is this velvet-boxed set, tapered gracefully and Balanced for swift, easy writing. Within this chest are three matched Sheaffer Balanced writing instruments, one of them the new writing companion for golf and handbag. It's a complete pencil with extra leads and eraser, fashioned for a firm grip and so compact that it clips to a watch-chain or carries unnoticed in vanity bag, knickers or dinner coat. Flanked by the pen and pencil that outsell all others in America—what a gift!

Identify the Lifetime° pen by this white dot.

Lifetime° set illustrated, with genuine Brazilian onyx base, $12 —others lower.

At better stores everywhere

All fountain pens are guaranteed against defects, but Sheaffer's Lifetime° is guaranteed unconditionally for your life, and other Sheaffer products are forever guaranteed against defect in materials and workmanship. Green and black Lifetime° pens, $8.75; Ladies', $7.50 and $8.25. Black and pearl De Luxe, $10.00; Ladies', $8.50 and $9.50. Pencils, $5.00.

SAFETY SKRIP, successor to ink, 50c (Refills, 3 for 25c)

SHEAFFER'S

PENS · PENCILS · DESK SETS · SKRIP

W. A. Sheaffer Pen Company, Fort Madison, Iowa, U. S. A.
New York · · · · · Chicago · · · · · San Francisco
W. A. Sheaffer Pen Co. of Can., Ltd., 169-173 Fleet St., Toronto, Ont.
Wellington, N.Z. · Sydney, Australia · 199 Regent St., London

° Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

Digitized by Google

© W. A. S. P. Co., 1929